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*GAUNTLET.*

BY LORD GORELL.

CHAPTER XVII.

How long Cecilia sat on the doorstep by her suit-case, exhausted and desolate, she never afterwards knew; nor could she give a clear account of what befell her next. She had a vague recollection of being spoken to curiously by some woman who was passing by and of repelling her sympathy with irrational vexation: she had also a remembrance, equally shadowy, but more menacing, of being spoken to by a man who stopped and questioned her, of rising up in renewed affright and of fleeing in distressed haste from him. But that either of these occurrences had actually happened she could not truthfully have testified. Under-feeding, illness, the laborious dragging of her suit-case to Morpeth Mansions, the upheaval of the horrid experience there, and the physical spurt of flight—all these in quick sequence had so struck at her that she was left half-hysterical, wholly confused. She was certain of nothing until, what seemed to her long ages after, she was made aware of a voice which was not merely friendly but also in some degree familiar.

‘My word, I thought you were never coming! I was just wondering what I ought to do about it.’

Cecilia came, as it were, back to the surface to find herself fixedly ringing Miss Chivers’s bell, with the door open and Miss Knight standing above her on the step. The street was ill-lit and it was not for a moment that Miss Knight realized that Cecilia was hardly aware of her, but was still pressing the bell in a dazed and pitiable condition. Then she broke out in long, streaming sentences of indignation and sympathy, most incongruously blended, and, jumping down as she talked, put her arm round Cecilia and helped her in.

‘Gosh, you wait till I get my fingers on him!’ she exclaimed ferociously. ‘You just wait! I’ll make him wish—my, but you do look bad. Had a bit of a tussle with him, I can see. Those elderly old fatties are always the worst. In here and I’ll get you a nice cup of tea! Cheer up: there’s better times coming. I believe I can fix you. Pull yourself together.’

Miss Knight hustled Cecilia into the waiting-room with such energetic kindness that Cecilia almost stumbled. She sank down in mistiness and gratitude into a chair as the door through into Miss Chivers's little sanctum opened.

'Is this the young lady at last?' came an incisive, but not unfriendly, voice: then it suddenly rose into sharp surprise: 'Why, what ever's happened?'

'She's had a bit of an upset, your ladyship,' explained Miss Knight. 'She'll be all right in a minute: I'm getting her a cup of tea.'

Cecilia opened her eyes to find herself in the presence of a strange lady who was gazing at her with a keen sympathy and an interested curiosity that she made no attempt to disguise. The lady was tall, silvery-haired, and exceedingly good-looking: her rather aquiline features were saved from all asperity both by their evident refinement and also by the kindly expression that was stamped as habitual upon them; and, as she stood leaning a little upon a stout, rubber-tipped stick, it was obvious that, lame and old as she might be, she still retained in abundance her activity of mind.

'All right in a minute?' she repeated with energy. 'Why, she looks a perfect wreck!'

Cecilia struggled with infinite difficulty into a more upright position: the surroundings of the room had brought her back with an agonising rush to the realities of her situation. She was at Miss Chivers's agency: by a most happy chance a lady, a real lady, one who spoke the same language and had the same mental outlook as herself, a kind lady too, was there: she must be wanting a servant, a something. What had Miss Knight said? She believed she could fix her: get her a place, did that mean? Was it possible? At least Cecilia could not afford to let so precious an opportunity pass: she must at once fling aside her weakness or for ever drown. Summoning all her resources, she sprang to her feet saying with a passion of appeal,

'Oh, but I'm strong, much stronger than I look! And I'm willing, and not incompetent! Only give me a trial!'

Sudden vertigo overwhelmed her: the quick springing up betrayed her. The room dissolved before her eyes into a blur of lights and spots; a sound of roaring waters was loud within her ears. She swayed and collapsed back, dizzy and helpless, into the chair from which she had sprung.

'Poor child, poor child!' murmured the voice, seemingly far away. 'She's had a bad time.' The voice took on a sharper note of authority as its possessor turned to Miss Knight. 'Get some water or that cup of tea you were talking about! Quickly, please!' Miss Knight ran and the old lady bent over Cecilia, lying back white and spent: the voice, speaking low to its possessor, became gentle and soothing in her half-uncomprehending ears. 'Plucky little thing, goes with her head up till she drops, I know the type. And pretty, awfully pretty, that's been the trouble, I expect. I don't wonder——'

Cecilia opened her eyes and the voice stopped. The next instant Miss Knight hurried in and began her ministrations with voluble sympathy. Cecilia suffered her uncomplainingly: some message seemed to have passed mutely between her young, frightened eyes and the old, calm eyes of the lady: Cecilia struggled against Fate no more but patiently awaited whatever was to develop. The visitor listened appreciatively and without interruption whilst Miss Knight expatiated at length and with ardency against what she called 'those two beauties,' Dr. Humphrey Lasker and Mr. Geoffrey Benton—'a disgrace to the town, the pair of them; I'd run them out on a rail like they do in America, so I've heard—and she goes straight from the one to the other. Is it any wonder she hasn't a kick left in her? I don't think!'

After a few minutes of Miss Knight's discourse little that she knew or imagined about either man or Cecilia's past experiences was unknown to her hearer, and matter enough for a dozen actions for slander had been put into circulation. Before Miss Knight had completed a sufficient portion of her general survey to be at the stage of repetition, Cecilia was sitting up with a faint tinge of colour in her cheeks, gratefully sipping her tea.

The old lady, still leaning on her stick, turned to Miss Knight and began in a low voice to question her: as through water Cecilia could hear Miss Knight's replies, in a friendship as warm as it was young trying to gloze over her lack of references.

'And now, if you're feeling well enough,' said the old lady, at length, returning slowly to Cecilia, 'let's talk business. It's getting late and we've a long way to go.'

'I'm quite well,' responded Cecilia eagerly: 'I'm sorry I was so silly, but I had a nasty little experience.'

'So I gather. And you're free?'

'As the birds of the air—and as unsupported.' Cecilia uttered

the last three words in a low voice, to herself more than to her questioner. What impelled her to this unnecessary addition she could not say: she only knew that she felt singularly drawn to this lady, at once so kindly and so keen-eyed, and was beyond the wish to hide from her her destitution.

'That's fortunate—for me, I mean. I'm motoring through and I——' The lady hesitated a moment and surveyed Cecilia again with a glance that seemed to read her right through. 'I get a message,' she went on, apparently content with the result of her renewed scrutiny, 'to say that if I go straight home, as I intended, I shall not have a single moment's peace. That's cheering, isn't it?'

'Very,' answered Cecilia, wondering what was coming.

'So her ladyship comes to Miss Chivers, of course,' put in Miss Knight importantly, 'and I thought of you. And so——'

'Let me tell my own story, please,' intervened the visitor without irritation but with an authority to which Miss Knight instantly deferred. 'Wraybourne's my name, though that won't convey anything to you, and in a sentimental moment I've rashly taken upon myself to be responsible for two small children whilst their parents are in India. And that's where you come in, if you will.'

Wraybourne? Had she or had she not ever heard the name? Cecilia could not remember; so many names had sounded briefly in her ears during the vanished days of her promotion into the world of distinction. At any rate, even if she had ever heard it, the speaker was right, it conveyed nothing to her now. Two small children? Strive as she would to listen, Cecilia could hardly understand for her weakness.

'Their nurse has left them suddenly,' went on Lady Wraybourne. 'I never liked her and I was put in complete control, so what was I to do? Pretend or let her go? Anyway, she's gone, and I find myself, at my age, landed with two mischievous little monkeys that'll exhaust me utterly in ten minutes. MacDougall, my kind old maid's, looking after them for the moment, but they're altogether too much for her. They've taken her measure most amusingly, and besides, I want her myself.'

'Are you, are you asking me to come and take charge of them?'

faltered Cecilia.

'Have I been asking anything else? Of course I am: you're just what I've been hoping to find.'

'But you don't know anything about me?'

'I hear you've no references, but then I've also heard the reason.'



References from some employers are worse than useless. And, if it comes to that, I've none. You'll have to take me on trust too. Are you satisfied ?'

'Quite.' It was the most inadequate expression possible of Cecilia's feeling, but all speech was difficult to her.

'So am I. Miss Knight's told me all she knows, and it's enough. I don't go by paper, I go by my own eyesight. You've taught in a school ?'

'Yes.'

'Very well, and you're free to come right away ?'

'This very minute,' gasped Cecilia, hardly able to believe that her hearing was not deceiving her.

'Excellent, that's what I meant. Now as to terms——' Lady Wraybourne knew her own mind, and, whatever her degree of competence with small children, she was at least completely mistress of her own affairs. She named a generous scale of payment and, in less time than it took Cecilia to grasp fully what had happened to her, she had had her supported on the stalwart arm of Miss Knight and placed in the large Daimler that was waiting incongruously in the little street. It had been unnoticed by Cecilia on her dazed arrival, and the staid, elderly chauffeur was far too little impressed by the provincial town in which he found himself to have been interested in any of its happenings ; Cecilia did not begin to exist for him until she emerged from Miss Chivers's agency in his mistress's wake. At the time Cecilia was conscious of nothing but the need for retaining Lady Wraybourne's approval, and in her utter weariness she was incapable of making any movement towards that if it were not hers of its own volition : it was only later that she was glad to learn that the chauffeur—Richard Fraser, married to a nice little wife, with a jolly child of eleven—had not the superiority that must have been his had he heeded her distraught ringing.

Cecilia had left to her no mind and hardly any consciousness. She existed in what she felt to be a dream ; but she could neither plan nor speculate. It was Lady Wraybourne who commented upon her suit-case and, after further inquiry, directed Fraser to go round by the lodgings where Cecilia had left her trunk. That was retrieved and, as the back of the car was already fully loaded with Lady Wraybourne's luggage, it was squeezed in in front beside Fraser with the suit-case precariously perched on top of it. In so far as Cecilia had strength with which to reason at all, she

wondered how Fraser, who seemed so particularly conventional, liked a strange, poor girl's impedimenta jostling his arm and spoiling the appearance of his large and dignified car; and she wondered still more at the thoughtful kindness which had made Lady Wraybourne remember a young nursery-governess's possible possessions, and, late as it had grown, be so graciously willing to go out of her way to gather them. It was all arranged too with such a consolatory absence of fuss. And when they were really on their journey, heading out from the little town, grown so incredibly sordid and hateful, with what simplicity of phrase her kind old employer put her at her ease.

'Push that cushion behind you and tuck the rug in, my dear,' were the quiet words. 'You're worn out. There's plenty of time for a bit of rest before we stop for the night. I must get you strong again quickly if you're going to cope successfully with the children.'

Cecilia thanked her in a few words which, however sincere, expressed far less than she felt, made herself as comfortable as her aching body permitted and settled down into unreality. The great car ran swiftly forwards, its lights seemed to draw the road towards themselves smoothly and remorselessly out of the heavy hangings of the outer darkness: in between, black and almost grim, was the squat silhouette of Fraser's head which seemed to be pushing, pushing against the long tunnel of brightness in front. On and on went the car; rhythmic became the sounds; further and further drifted away all the tangible things of earth. Cecilia was an atom, just conscious of inscrutable Fate bearing her on. She had no resistance, no will: she was folded in warmth, she was touched by kindness. She closed her eyes not consciously but insensibly. She neither knew whither she was being borne nor did she care: in that hour she had but one dim, dull regret, that she was to be called upon once again to be with children. She had loved children all her life, of whatever kind or age—until she had gone to 42 Laburnum Villas and been brought closely into contact with Mostyn Theodosius Emmanuel Lasker. Childhood and Mostyn—how remote from one another! And yet Mostyn was a child and as such had poisoned her thoughts of children. And before him had been that insensitive little ruddy-haired boy in the train, around whose remembrance lay the roots of pain.

Cecilia's drooping eyelids closed upon the wish that she could be anything, however humble, to this kind, imperious, old lady beside her, but freed from all children for ever. Yet she could not

choose : she was being borne away from the town where she had suffered so acutely ; she was very weak and very lucky. She must not begin this new phase of her emptied life with one tinge of regret. Consciousness even of this drifted away from her and, still borne along in the sliding car, she slept.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

It was not until the following morning that the sense of unreality that had descended on her like a mist began slowly to dissolve in Cecilia's mind before the sunshine of Lady Wraybourne's continued kindness. She had roused herself from sleep but not from unreality to find the car stopped at the door of an hotel ; she had been sensible as in sleep of getting out of the car, hearing her employer-engage rooms, tidying for dinner, eating it, even talking during it, sitting awhile in a lounge over coffee—doing in fact just those things which she might once have expected to do naturally and simply in her own right, doing them now as an automaton under impulsions—and then of being sent off early to bed. During all these incidents she had moved still in the mist. Every now and again a ray of truth broke momentarily through as some kindly inflection of Lady Wraybourne's quick, incisive tones or some friendly glance from her keen old eyes struck upon her deadly weariness and whispered to her that the most evil of her days was done ; but for the most part she could not believe that she was not experiencing a vivid triumph of the imagination, and shudders of apprehension that she would awake and find herself back at the Laskers' or imprisoned in Geoffrey Benton's flat surged irrepressibly over her.

After a night's sleep fact began very slowly and wonderfully to dominate fancy. No degree of memory could dispel the knowledge that, on awaking, she found herself in a comfortable bed in a clean and airy room, and to that knowledge was surely added a recollection of the process that had brought her to it. Only one doubt remained, the feeling almost amounting to conviction that in the excess of relief at her deliverance she must altogether have over-estimated the consideration and the humanity of the lady who had delivered her. For many minutes after she had awoken, Cecilia tried soberly to reconstruct her impression of Lady Wraybourne, that she might not begin her new employment by a fresh disillusion. How had the old lady looked when she found on arrival at the hotel that the new governess instead of helping her lameness and her luggage had stood by uselessly, still struggling

with the sleep that had engulfed her? What had Cecilia said during dinner that was companionable or even tolerable? How had she answered her employer in the interval before she was despatched to bed, no doubt in disgrace? Cecilia tried so hard to remember, but the whole of the evening's proceedings were shrouded. All she could be certain of was that she had failed dismally just when every instinct both of gratitude and of prudence should have spurred her to success.

At this point her reflections were interrupted by a knock on the door. One of the hotel maids entered with a message from Lady Wraybourne. Cecilia heard it suspiciously: to have her breakfast in bed, if she liked, at any rate not to trouble herself about anything, but to be ready to go on again in the car at ten o'clock—it sounded kind enough, but Cecilia's fears interpreted it to run: 'You're quite useless: do as you please as you did last night. I can't get rid of you here, but I will as soon as ever I can.' Nervously she told the maid she would get up, and proceeded to do so at once. When dressed, she was at a loss: she wanted to go in to Lady Wraybourne, whose room, she discovered, was next door to hers, but was too diffident. Diffidence was a quality of new growth in her; she was desperately anxious to please and in her anxiety fearful of giving offence. Once she laid her knuckles on Lady Wraybourne's door ready to knock, but could not gain the courage to make the sound. She went downstairs finally, in a rage with herself for her inability to decide whether the old lady would be pleased or displeased at her abstention. If only Lady Wraybourne had had a maid with her: it was almost singular that she had not, since she was aged and infirm, obviously well off, and had been travelling by herself; but it was all in keeping with the impression of self-sufficient gallantry that she had somehow given Cecilia as her normal outlook upon life.

After breakfast Cecilia put in her things, fastened up her suitcase and waited about irresolutely until a quarter to ten. Then she could endure inaction no longer. She went boldly into the corridor and knocked upon the adjoining door.

'Yes, yes. Who's there?' came from within the voice which already seemed marvellously familiar to Cecilia.

'It's me, Miss Brooke,' she answered. 'Can't I do anything for you?'

'Nothing, nothing, thank you,' came cheerily from behind the door. 'I'm nearly ready. How are you? Rested?'

'Ever so much better. Are you sure I can't help?'

'Quite, thanks. I like doing for myself.'

There was no way in which Cecilia could show at once her competence and her gratitude but by having her suit-case brought down to the hall—dimly she remembered being asked overnight if she would want her trunk and declining it—and by waiting in readiness for Lady Wraybourne to descend and depart. At two minutes to ten the Daimler drew up at the front door and Cecilia went out to give Fraser her suit-case and to exchange a friendly word with him, in order to efface any impression of superiority she might unwittingly have given. She found him respectful and communicative: he hoped to get through to Darlingby by tea-time, 'if we start prompt,' he added, 'and her ladyship's never the one to be wasting time.'

Fraser broke off and moved quickly forward to take Lady Wraybourne's suit-case and dressing-case from the porter and bestow both in their several places in and on the car. Cecilia, turning, saw their owner looking at her keenly through the glass of the hotel door: she had not been asked into the bedroom, she had been kept, courteously but decisively, outside; she grew terribly afraid as she felt the keenness of the scrutiny, and when Lady Wraybourne came through the door stood shyly and could find no words.

'H'm, you don't look quite so done,' was Lady Wraybourne's comment, keen but not unkindly: 'it'll take you a few days to pull up. And you've been ill as well?'

'Oh, but nothing much,' eagerly disclaimed Cecilia. 'Just a touch of 'flu, I think. I'll be quite up to my duties, I really will.'

'My dear, I didn't mean that: I'm not a slave-driver. Well, Fraser,' turning to the chauffeur to avoid the appearance of being conscious of the quick flush that the considerate words brought leaping into Cecilia's pale cheeks, a tiny act that sent a glow of real affection suddenly through Cecilia's heart, 'shall we get home to-night without too long a run?'

'We ought to be back by dark, m'lady, easy,' he assured her.

'In that case I must send a telegram. They're not expecting us so soon. I won't be a minute and then we'll be off.'

She stumped gallantly back into the hotel, once again refusing Cecilia's proffered assistance.

'Where are we going to?' asked Cecilia.

'Darlingby, miss,' answered Fraser: then, noticing to his slight surprise that the word which meant so much to him meant

little or nothing to her, he enlarged, 'Darlingby Hall, her ladyship's place in Yorkshire, miss—not like her to leave it so soon after Christmas for anything.'

Yorkshire, thought Cecilia. Luckily Yorkshire was a big county: she had heard John Harland speak of it with affection as having harboured his boyhood in many a holiday among its spacious dales. Why should that recur to her now? It was big enough, even if he were ever to revisit it, to afford her adequate hiding-ground. She must not let herself be haunted by such wispy ghosts. Lady Wraybourne returned from telegraphing and in another moment they were off.

It was one of those mild and sunny days of January that seem to go leaping and laughing precociously, yet charmingly, towards the longer warmer days. To Cecilia, reclining back in the big car luxuriously beside her new employer, it was a day of magic: she abandoned herself to the sensation, revelling in the quiet hues and unexpected lights, the sudden changes of scenery so characteristic of England, as they left one county and entered another, the peace of the fields, the shadowy beauty of the woods, the busy life of the villages and smaller towns. After weeks of bloodless, monotonous work the mere rush of the clean air was a joyous recreation. And she was leaving, further and further away with every minute, the darkest battlefield of her life: soon, behind her both in place and in time, it would be nothing worse to her than a terrible memory.

For all her appreciation of the changing scene, she was full of consciousness of her companion: since Lady Wraybourne's considerate words and action the edge of her apprehension had lost its sharpness, but she still felt that she was with some one who, however kind, nevertheless expected the best and was determined to have it. And could Cecilia give the best? She had all the will possible, but had she the qualifications needful for the new post? Nursery-governess to two children; it sounded neither arduous nor exacting, and yet children could be, Cecilia now knew, dreadfully undesirable. Lady Wraybourne had described them as mischievous and exhausting: those epithets had in themselves no ominous suggestion, but then Dr. Lasker had called Mostyn intelligent and to Mrs. Lasker he had been sensitive. Cecilia had been so belaboured by Fate that all her self-confidence was gone. What were these two children in whose small hands were to lie her destiny? She bestirred herself to ask.



'The children?' Lady Wraybourne came out of the brown study into which she had allowed herself, lulled by the smooth motion of the speeding car, to fall. 'Oh, the boy's a fearful monkey, the most oddly defiant little wretch I think I ever set eyes on; it seems sometimes as though he simply didn't care. I admit I don't know much about children nowadays, but I've not found out how to tackle him. I haven't seriously tried, I'm afraid. It's too exhausting for an old woman: I find myself insensibly falling back on the line of least resistance in order to keep my popularity. Very weak of me, I know.'

Cecilia's heart missed a beat: it mattered to her so terribly that she should now make good. No matter how kindly Lady Wraybourne might be, continuance in her employ must naturally depend on adequacy, and this account of one of her future charges was dreadful. 'A boy who simply didn't care': how very ironic, how truly characteristic of that underhand fighter, Fate, to send her to be with the one kind of temperament with which she felt least sympathy and least able to deal.

'And the other?' she asked with diffidence.

'Felicity? Well, I understand her a bit better as she's a girl, but make her do what she doesn't want to do, I simply cannot!'

'Is she—is she one of the simply-don't-care kind too?'

'Not as the boy is. They're extraordinarily different, which is interesting, I suppose, to their parents.'

'You don't sound very fond of them, Lady Wraybourne.'

'I am in my own way, but children didn't bulk so large in my young days as they do to-day. I had to be respectful and do as I was told. These children haven't the least idea of doing as they're told, and they talk to me as though I were their contemporary.'

'That can be very attractive—sometimes.'

'Where they get it from I can't imagine,' went on Lady Wraybourne musingly. 'They've been very simply brought up. It's in the air, I suppose. And I'm too old. It'd be different, perhaps, if they were my grandchildren. I haven't any—now.' Her voice quavered just a trifle on the final word, and Cecilia was quick to interpret and keep her glance turned towards the window.

'I suppose, if all the truth were known,' Lady Wraybourne resumed after a pause, 'I'm jealous, not consciously, you know, but deep down. My only son had a little boy, and they're both gone. Robin caught pneumonia and just snuffed out before I'd even learnt he was ill, and Tom was killed in the war.'



She spoke with simplicity and directness and with no trace of self-pity and once again Cecilia felt her heart go out suddenly to an old and gallant figure. Cecilia tried to find suitable words, but all that came to her were rejected as banal. She gave Lady Wraybourne one look which had the eloquence of real sympathy, and the old lady smiled back at her, and said understandingly,

'Life, as you've found in spite of your youth, isn't exactly a playground. At least,' she added with a reaction from feeling to humour, 'in these democratic post-war days it's a regular skirmish to exist at all, and I know I shall end under a 'bus.'

Silence fell upon them afresh as they sped along. Cecilia's thoughts, which for a while dwelt upon her employer, reverted in unconscious absorption to her employment: once more she found that she was asking herself persistently the same question, how would she get on with these two children, apparently so self-willed and undisciplined, to take responsibility for whom was the one reason why she had been lifted from the abyss of despair.

'How old are my future charges?' she asked finally.

'Felicity's nearly five and Daniel's about two and a half,' responded Lady Wraybourne after reflection.

'Not more?' Cecilia was puzzled.

'No, that's just about what they are.'

Cecilia said no more: she had, she felt, food for thought. The answer was decidedly unexpected: she had gathered the impression that the children were eight or nine at least. How and why had she gathered it? In part, from the comments Lady Wraybourne had so recently let fall; but not wholly. She racked her memory, that still confused and troublesome possession. It was not until later in the day that her search was rewarded. What questions had Lady Wraybourne asked her when she was engaging her? One only, and that had misled her.

'You look very thoughtful,' remarked Lady Wraybourne. They had run all the morning, stopped briefly for lunch and were now well on their way again.

'I was wondering why you'd asked me when you engaged me if I'd taught in a school.'

'Why not? It sounds a sensible question.'

'But the children are so little.'

'Well, I want you to teach them what you can and I had to ask something, just to impress that young assistant. I'd made up my mind. I said I didn't go by references; I trust to my own

judgment. I was asking you to trust yours, coming away at a moment's notice with a complete stranger.'

'Still——'

'My dear,' remarked Lady Wraybourne quite affectionately, 'I wanted some one who'd be company for me as well, and if I don't know a lady when I see one after all these years, then I'm better dead.'

Cecilia felt a quiet glow of gratification greater than she had dared believe again possible to her. If only she could retain her post! That anxiety sat heavy upon her as the sun began to droop in the west and the car entered upon the wide and rugged country that marked almost the final stage of their journey. It was growing dark as last as they swung off the main road, came again to woods and fields, went less swiftly and less smoothly along side roads and lanes and then turned in at last through the gates of Darlingby Hall.

In the gloom and in her fear, Cecilia gained no impression of it: her whole thought was now concentrated on the meeting with her two responsibilities.

'Four thirty-five,' remarked Lady Wraybourne as they drew up. 'Fraser's done well. I told them to expect us by tea-time: the children'll be on the watch most probably.'

Ah, another minute, and this ordeal, so strangely poignant by reason of its very gentleness of approach, would be over.

The door of the Hall was opened: light streamed out: a dignified butler descended the steps. Cecilia sprang down and, turning her back on the Hall, helped Lady Wraybourne descend: in all such small ways as were possible, she tried not only to delay but to efface herself. Yet the moment she most dreaded caught her unaware: she entered the big hall and then she saw the children.

They stood together at the top of the short wide flight of stairs. The little girl, apple-cheeked, brown-haired, brown-eyed, rather tall for her age, robust, with a round, merry face and the most ridiculous button of a nose, was slightly in advance of her brother and was seen first: she was dressed in a delicate dainty frock with her fat little arms bare and wound about her was a comic mixture of trailing remnants of silk and ribbons, an old bit of network, a strip of lace, a little imitation bunch of flowers and a tinsel crown, and she stood watching the stranger with an intensity of dignified seriousness.

'Oh, who are you?' cried Cecilia, running half-way up the stairs towards her.

'I'm the fairy princess,' gravely answered the child, 'and you're my new Nanny.'

'Shishiti,' announced the small boy. He was in white jersey and tiny knickers, too clean to have been put on for more than a few minutes, a large, sturdy fellow for two and a half, with hair like a ripened cornfield and wide apart, steady, light-blue eyes. He clutched a torn and bedraggled book of trains firmly in a hand already grubby and stared solemnly up at her without a trace of shyness.

'What?' exclaimed Cecilia, utterly baffled by the strange word.

'That's my name. He's trying to say Felicity, but he's only a little boy,' explained the princess. 'He's a very naughty little boy,' she added confidently, 'aren't you, Danny?'

'Danny naughty 'ickle boy,' corroborated her brother heartily.

'You're Felicity and you're Danny, is that it?' asked Cecilia.

'Dannihue Wentibare,' instantly remarked the small boy.

Again Cecilia was beaten. Lady Wraybourne, coming slowly up behind her, interpreted. 'Daniel Hugh Wrenstead Baird,' she said. 'Quite simple when you're used to it.'

'I'm Felicity Anna Gerring Baird,' said the princess with proud elocation. 'I'm a big girl, aren't I, Grannibel?'

'Oh, Lady Wraybourne!' exclaimed Cecilia with almost an ecstatic rebound of heart. 'They're simply delicious, both of them!'

'How you do jump to conclusions!' replied Lady Wraybourne, smiling. 'I believe you're very impulsive.'

'I thought I'd ceased being that,' murmured Cecilia. But Lady Wraybourne was now busy stooping with difficulty to kiss the upturned, expectant faces of her continually shifting wards.

## CHAPTER XIX.

'DANNY!'

A gurgle of indifference, quite beyond the powers of print to reproduce, was the only response that could be distinguished by the amused listener.

'Danny, shall we do everything we shouldn't?' The eagerness of an ambition that would take all mischief for its province thrilled joyously in Felicity's suggestive tones.

Cecilia could remain concealed no longer: she betrayed herself by giving way irresistibly to a peal of quiet laughter, and, being so betrayed, stepped with gaiety into the nursery.

'What are you laughing at, 'Cilia?' instantly enquired the small girl, energetically pushing one of her hapless, much injured dolls

into a miniature cot already scandalously overcrowded. It was apparent that she was extremely busy with her unruly children and that her comprehensive enquiry of her little brother had merely been by the way, a suggestion thrown out casually from an excess of imagination. Now she looked up at her laughing governess with a certain air of comical self-consciousness which caused her round and rosy face to dimple very humorously; her eyes met Cecilia's frankly with the confidence of a child that has never been frightened or even rebuffed.

'At you,' answered Cecilia: 'you get bigger and badder every day.'

Felicity received this tribute to her importance by breaking out into a sudden high and hearty laugh as at a superlative piece of wit: it was an accomplishment she had just acquired, and she was proportionately proud of it. It was in no sense musical, and yet it was so completely devoid of care, so entirely impossible except for the very young, that it was decidedly infectious. Cecilia at any rate did not for a moment attempt to withstand it. But it was never possible, when both children were present, to concentrate long upon either: both were not merely strong individualists, but blessed in abundance with that happy egotism which is certain that the rest of the world was created to revolve in docility round it. Danny almost immediately claimed Cecilia's attention: he was extremely busy harshly striking a piece of metal he had found against the wall in a corner of the nursery.

'Danny,' she cried, 'what are you doing?'

'I'm getting the paint off the wall,' he announced with pleasurable pride.

'You young monkey, you mustn't!'

'You old monkey!' was his prompt retort: then as an afterthought: 'Why mustn't I?'

'Danny's a very naughty little boy,' stated his sister in a matter-of-fact voice, 'isn't he, 'Cilia?'

'Well,' explained Cecilia, trying to make herself feel authoritative, 'he's too little to understand.'

'I had 'cambolled aigg for geffus,' observed Danny with cheerfully complete irrelevance.

'So'd I,' instantly asserted Felicity, 'so there!' She stuck her pert little nose into the air in scorn at such a claim to isolated importance: scrambled egg for breakfast indeed!

'Danny, what have you got hold of?' enquired Cecilia, her eyes

drawn to the instrument with which he had been assaulting the paint. 'Why, that's the spanner I've been looking for everywhere for the nut on my sewing machine!'

'It's my 'ickle gick,' declared Danny stubbornly.

Cecilia, by now sufficiently conversant with his language, informed him that it was on the contrary 'her little stick' and that he must give it up. 'Don't keep banging it on the wall like that,' she concluded, grabbing him dexterously by the heels as he crawled away rapidly under the table.

This did not at all suit the spirit of a youthful buccaneer: drawn out strugglingly, he repelled the assault with all energy, crying out, 'Don't 'oo don't me!'

A few seconds later, having lost his weapon of offence to superior strength, he did his war dance, a very creditable representation of a Russian stamping measure. Cecilia had met it in him before, and the sight of a tiny, sturdy figure stamping round and round as though in uncontrollable rage always awoke her sense of the ridiculous: she at once stamped round too to the tune of 'Ever so crossy, crossy, crossy.' Danny tried to continue to stamp his wrath, but the effort was beyond him; in a few seconds he had yielded to laughter and his stamping changed to an energetic fun-dance, with the origin completely forgotten.

The memory recurred to her later when Danny was sleeping soundly, a cherub lapped in peace, and Felicity was by way of resting, with one foot over her head and the other idly scratching the wall at an elevation that was distinctly inelegant and at an angle impossible to an adult without excessive pain, whilst she kept up a sort of quietly chanted monologue all about her dolls and their adventures with the flowers on the wall-paper. Cecilia sat in the sunny day-nursery doing some of the ever-necessary mendings, and her thoughts wreathed themselves round the single sentence, 'Behold, I saw a new heaven and a new earth.'

She had been a month at Darlingby now—a very tranquil, a very healing time. She had gone nowhere, she had seen nobody, she had done nothing except keep a lame old lady company and look after two small children. Yet she had found her days free of all monotony. She had regained her wasted strength and, more, she had restored to health her lacerated mind. Almost it seemed to her as though she had died and been born again: the days before her meeting with John Harland now seemed to her in many ways closer and more real than those which had succeeded to her wedding.

Her short engagement flamed like a rose, scenting the air, and then was a darkness and despair that, recent as they were, seemed now impossible. Before the strange beauty of the birth to her of love she had been a teacher, not unhappy in the least but without experience of the greater joys of life, a quiet and contented spirit moving along lowland paths, unmindful of the mountain splendours. Since the sudden desolation of her heart and her rescue from the evils that had immediately engulfed her, she had become once again much as she had been, a teacher of the young, not attempting to tread the heights, content if she could avoid the sloughs, a humble, moderately useful person to whom nothing wonderful could happen and from whom all that was worst was stayed.

Not for a day, and hardly for an hour, did Cecilia forget the visions that had dazzled her. She had known love, therefore it was for ever a living part of her : it had been torn roughly from her, therefore she could never be joyous. Between the two extremes her lot must always lie. So was it, she reflected, for many others on this varied and contradictory earth : she must neither mourn nor grumble ; she must gather to herself gladly every flower that came her way and never be envious of those whose heaven had known no overshadowing.

She was not joyous, because she was not forgetful : she was not unhappy, because she found both in Lady Wraybourne and the two children increasing springs of comfort. Her first impressions of the former were deepened every day : to her her employer was unfailing in a kindness that was now warming into friendship, and to the world she presented a front in which humour blended with courage. Lady Wraybourne was never at a loss either for an occupation or a retort, and Cecilia, who had begun with gratitude and speedily passed to affection, found that continual close association brought her daily nearer to devotion. Since her father died, she had known no adult to whom she could give dispassionate love : despite all the forces of disillusion she was too young, too idealistic not to respond eagerly to Lady Wraybourne. She gave her no confidences : she had none which were hers to give, and Dead Sea fruit was in any case too bitter ever to be shared : but between old lady and young girl a very simple and beautiful relation was thrusting out its roots in the quietude of Darlingby. And as for the children, Cecilia had taken them straight into her empty heart that weary evening of her arrival, and there they had nestled and squabbled and chattered ever since. 'A new heaven and a



new earth.' New in all ways: the old, like a snake's skin, lifeless behind her, the new placid, uneventful before her, outstretched upon the plain as far as her imagination could reach.

How beautiful it was to live uneventfully! Once, in the hey-day of her inexperience, she had been eager for happenings, she had had a zest for adventure. That phase of her life was over. Adventure was a dragon to be feared, happenings were evils to be dreaded. She was content to be at Darlingby, even in the dead days of January: she did not want to go outside the estate or to meet strangers. All she wanted was peace and the homely company of one old enough to be her grandmother and of two young enough to be her children: with the few of her own generation who occasionally called or came over to a meal she was not at ease; she avoided them altogether, if possible, and she escaped to her nurseries as soon as she could on the occasions when Lady Wraybourne invited her specially. This desire for solitude, or at all events for quietness, one day called forth Lady Wraybourne's comment.

'I know it's dull here at this time of year,' she remarked; 'but you seem actually to enjoy that.'

'I do,' answered Cecilia.

'All I can say is you oughtn't to: it's unnatural, and I'm a believer in Nature—up to a point. At first you were worn out, but you're not now.'

Cecilia, to defend herself, had to fall back on the argument that there was such a lot of noise and racket in the post-war world that it showed sense in her to appreciate its opposite.

'Sense!' retorted Lady Wraybourne with spirit. 'Who ever looks for sense in a person of your age? I shall have to do something about it or one day you'll wake up suddenly to the fact that you're horribly bored here and will leave me.'

'I'm little likely to do that,' replied Cecilia earnestly.

Lady Wraybourne gave her one of her keen and kindly glances and let the subject drop: but Cecilia did not forget. It recurred to her often and always with a thankfulness that her maimed life should have been allowed to creep into such gentle places.

On the afternoon of the day when she sat for the quiet hour before lunch thinking of all these things, she first went further afield than Lady Wraybourne's boundaries. Lady Wraybourne was visiting friends some miles away, and in consequence the children did not go downstairs after their lunch but were ready to go out earlier than usual. It was a warm and beautiful afternoon,



with the spirit of youth whispering very attractively through the February air ; so subtle was the suggestion that it tempted Cecilia unawares, and instead of being as perfectly content as heretofore to take the children the same round of field-path, farm, and lane as had usually satisfied both her and their uncritical direction, she said to them as she tipped the perambulator down the little step leading to the drive from her door of egress, ' Well, where shall we go this afternoon ? '

' I want to see the ga-gas,' said Danny.

' No, 'Cilia, don't let's,' pleaded Felicity, as though the ducks that were her daily delight were now repellent to her : ' let's go——' she paused long enough to show that her objection was based solely on the principle of contrariety and that, having voiced it, she was thinking of a reason to support it—' oh, I do want to go to Ha-Hollyland ! ' she finished with the accent of sincerity of an accomplished actress expressing the one long-concealed desire of her existence.

Cecilia was at no loss to understand. For one thing, she knew that Felicity had a curious trick of duplicating the beginnings of certain words—for example, she was passionately addicted to flower pictures and among these her favourite was one of what she invariably termed ' ca-carnations ' ; and for another ' Ha-Hollyland ' had often been on both the children's lips, a place where once ( ' when we were very little, Danny was only a baby ' according to Felicity—this meant, Cecilia concluded, the previous autumn or summer) they had had a picnic. Felicity's description had been brief but dramatic, ' lots of cakes and bikkies, and Danny got so jammy ' ; she remembered the way or at any rate asserted that she did, and as she had a remarkable memory for direction for so small a child, and as, in any case, it was of no moment where they all went as long as they went somewhere different on this alluring afternoon, Cecilia laughingly fell in with the random suggestion, and they set off accordingly for ' Ha-Hollyland.'

On the way Cecilia in the intervals of endeavouring to satisfy Felicity's inordinate appetite for stories was able to spare a thought or two to wonder afresh at her own lack of enterprise. The way—according to Felicity, who raced on ahead in all the importance of a guide—led by winding lane to ancient orchard and from that haunt of elf and fay on down a dell and into a wood where a grassy path led up a slope between the lightly slumbering trees. Except for the chatter of the children and the note of the thrush and black-bird—both children and birds inexperienced songsters practising

doubtfully—there was no sound in all the world : it was much more attractive than any walk Cecilia had yet been : how lazy-minded of her, she thought, never to have discovered it before.

In high fettle Felicity led the way : Cecilia tugged the light country perambulator up the grass-path, feeling more glad to be alive than she had been able to feel since her tribulations began. At the top of the slope she looked down through the trees and cried suddenly aloud with pleasure.

‘I don’t see the hollies, darling,’ she called to Felicity who was now racing wildly down-hill ; ‘but I love your Hollyland !’ Her eyes sparkled with a new delight as she gazed on the scene spread out in front of her.

‘You can’t catch me !’ sang Felicity.

‘Can’t I ?’ answered Cecilia, abandoning as inopportune her desire to take in all the detail : Felicity was disappearing into the unknown, and she must follow her charge promptly. With Danny exhorting her in a stentorian voice and bumping wildly, she launched herself in laughing emulation of the little, speeding feet.

## CHAPTER XX.

It did not take Cecilia, active and almost merry as she had become on this smiling February afternoon, long to overtake the flying figure of Felicity. Handicapped though she was by the perambulator containing the joggled and ecstatic Danny, she drew level with Felicity as they all neared the bottom of the wood. She then took the lead and ran on until her progress was stopped by a gate leading into a great, rolling meadow : over that she leaned, gasping and laughing, with a rose-flushed face and bright eyes, a girl from whose heart all pain had momentarily fled. Felicity joined her and instantly began to get into dangerous positions on the bars of the gate : Danny insisted upon being put upon his feet, which he also immediately used for the purpose of daring acrobatics. Cecilia was faced, if she continued to lean on the gate gazing, with the imminence of two broken necks and several disjointed limbs. She unclasped Danny from the gate, much as a tripper dislodges a limpet, by plucking him suddenly before he had time to tighten his tiny fists, and set him over the bars on to the grass of the meadow : then she helped Felicity over, and finally, with a sudden return of sedateness, unfastened the gate and went through herself, trailing the light perambulator after her.

‘What ever is that lovely place, Felicity ?’ she asked.

'That's Ha-Hollyland,' announced Felicity obscurely, running forward again and throwing herself delightedly down on the soft, damp grass. Danny at once imitated her, both his fat little legs high in air. It was several seconds before Cecilia, by dint of threats of instant incarceration in the perambulator if they declined to behave themselves, could get them safely on to their feet again, and have leisure for the scene before her.

In front, across the rolling meadow, on the other side of a low, trim ha-ha stretched a garden, a realm of dignity and grace, enriched with terraces well-designed and alluring, with harmonizing statues at corners of the paths and in the centre a big, marble pool with a delicate sea-nymph blowing her horn as she urged on her curly-maned steeds. No water was shooting up into the air, nor at that season was the whole scene a blaze of colour and a dream of scent; yet it required but little imagination on that soft and sunny afternoon to picture the garden tenanted and alive in June. And beyond the terraces and fountain, on the rising ground on the further side of the little valley ran first of all a wide smoothness of lawn starting on the one side from a grove of old and splendid oaks and ending on the other in the harmonies of a big wood, and behind that again, serene in contemplation of the smoothness, stood a long, low, gabled house, mellow with the grayness of its age, of many rooms and magnificent proportions, a house as gentle as it was stately, that seemed to Cecilia's imaginative brain to look out across the quiet valley and say to her and to all venturers in that valley, but most of all to her who even in her merriest hour had special need of comfort—'Come to me and be at rest!'

'Oh, but I do like that!' she exclaimed, more to herself than to the roving children.

'That's where I'm going to live when I grow up, with all my dolls,' declared Felicity. 'Perhaps I'll ask you to come and have tea with me sometimes, if you're very good.'

'Thank you,' murmured Cecilia meekly.

'My high castle!' boasted Danny with cheerful mendacity.

'But who lives there now and what's its real name?' asked Cecilia, wandering on with them through the meadow, still gazing at the great house with deep appreciation: the nearer she came, the older, the more peaceful, and the more beautiful it seemed. She could make out now some of the lovely scroll-work of stone over the windows and also how shuttered and still the whole appearance was. She had stumbled on the palace of the Sleeping Beauty—

at least so it would have seemed but for the order and care evident in all that met her eyes. No overgrown briars, no wilderness of rampant weeds here: every path was smooth, its edges cut, every bed was raked and clean, ready for the spring glory; in a corner blazed a wealth of crocuses, whilst nearer in the meadow at the side near the wood a great drift of snowdrops, perfect in the beauty of their delicate prime, stretched like a soft patch of late-lying frost, and beyond this again wild daffodils in thousands were thrusting up the gray-green spears of their forerunning leaves. Money as well as taste had gone to the making and preservation of the beauty before her: it lived, and graciously, but it was fast asleep.

'Dunno,' responded Felicity indifferently. 'It's Ha-Hollyland, of course.'

'That's what you call it, you mean.'

'That's what everybody calls it.'

'Oh, well, I'm no wiser.'

'But you're much beautifuller.'

Cecilia laughed and abandoned the quest for knowledge.

'We mustn't go much further,' she remarked at length when they had wandered happily right across the meadow: 'we're probably trespassing as it is.'

'What's trepersing?' enquired Felicity.

'Going where we oughtn't to.'

'But Grannibel often used to bring us here when we were little.'

'And what are you now, pray?' asked Cecilia, laughing. She made no further protest, however, when Felicity darted down the ditch of the ha-ha and wriggled dexterously up the other side and over into the garden. She wanted, now that she had come so far, to see as much of the lovely place and house as she reasonably could, and it was probable, even certain, that 'Grannibel'—the children's name for Lady Wraybourne as an abbreviated Granny Isabel, to distinguish her from their real Granny—was well acquainted with the family who owned it and had visited there with them. In any case, trespassing with little children was a very pardonable offence. She left the perambulator behind, and, lifting Danny, climbed up into the garden also.

'We mustn't be long, darlings,' was the full extent of her caution, 'or we'll never be back by tea-time.'

The marble fountain appealed to all three of them: Cecilia sat on its low edge, grateful for the moment's rest, the children dropped pebbles joyously into the water. That, however, did not

long content their younger animation: very shortly they were making such efforts to splash their fingers that it was obvious to Cecilia, grabbing first one and then the other resolutely by their nether garments, that it would be only a question of minutes, if they stayed by the fountain, before one or the other eluded her vigilance and pitched head foremost into the water. She harried her brood humorously up the terraces and on to the smoothness of lawn, where they could safely gambol to their hearts' content and she could look her fill at the splendid, silent house. So far she had seen no one; not even a gardener had come to question them, and this absence of humanity gave to the whole scene the added charm of elfin unreality. It was not a house made with hands: it was the palace of a dream.

But the children, calling to one another like a pair of magpies, giving vent to a great hubbub of gay, nonsensical nothings, were bound to attract attention, if not call forth rebuke. Cecilia, feeling very conspicuous but also very irresponsible, was about to gather them and depart when an old man, wheeling a barrow, came slowly round the corner of the trees towards the house. Felicity, whose memory both for faces and for places was remarkable, dropped her chatter with Danny at once and raced towards him excitedly as to a long-lost friend. Cecilia, following on, had just time to admire the picture as the old man, wrinkling his face into a smile, desisted from his task and stopped to greet her with pleasure.

'Why, it's little Miss Felicity,' he said. 'It's long since I saw ye.'

'Shishiti,' corroborated Danny, panting in rear.

'And Master Daniel, to be sure.' The old man then looked at Cecilia enquiringly and touched his hat with a 'Good afternoon, miss.'

'I see you know this pair of rascals,' said Cecilia. 'I was afraid we'd get into trouble, wandering in like this.'

'Oh, no, miss, that's all right. Any one from Darlingby's always welcome. And there's no one at home.'

'The family all away? It looks shut up, but beautifully tidy.'

'Tis kept so now,' answered the old man with simple pride. 'We did think as there'd be company and all, this Christmas as was, but no, it warn't to be.'

'It's a lovely place,' repeated Cecilia, half-turning to get a fresh impression of the house from another angle. 'I wonder it's ever left unoccupied.'

'It's been more often than not, too, miss, these last many years. But then that's the way of things.'

'What's it called? The children's name for it is the funny one of Ha-Hollyland.'

He laughed, looking down upon them tolerantly, as they rummaged busily among the leaves and rubbish in his barrow, unmindful of their elders' uninteresting conversation.

'And that's as near as their little tongues can manage, I dare swear,' he said. 'But you're from Darlingby, aren't ye?'

'Yes.'

'Well, then, who's not heard tell of it at Darlingby?'

'I haven't been there long and have been little about.'

'I see. A stranger, are ye? But strangers and all know of Hartley Harland.'

'What! What's that you said?' Cecilia, resting casually against one of the handles of the barrow, was stricken suddenly into an extremity of attention.

'Hartley Harland: 'tis sure ye have heard tell of it. 'Tis one of the old places, and the finest of them all in Yorkshire to my thinking. Man and boy, though, I've been about here nigh on sixty-seven year and ye do get a liking for the paths ye know.'

'Hartley Harland!' Cecilia breathed out the name like a long-lingering memory of a home dearly loved: her eyes were turned upon the deep, mellow beauty of the old, great house with a wistfulness that dissolved it into mist; a burning pain seized upon her vision, and suddenly she could see no more.

'Who lives here?' she asked in a low voice.

'Why, 'tis Sir John's, to be sure. Always a John Harland for the house, though it's little they bide here, more's the pity.'

She had not needed to ask: she did not know what had prompted the question. Why, when she knew, should she give herself the added pain of hearing the name repeated? Her name, if she had chosen to acknowledge it: her house, if she had chosen to enter it. The name that one solemn, lovely hour had made hers, the house to which once he had hoped to bring her. 'We did think as there'd be company and all, but it warn't to be'—she understood the old man's saying now as he would never, never understand it. Hartley Harland—the great place John had mentioned to her so mysteriously, the old home he would not describe in advance lest his words should disfigure it in reality. As a stranger, led by little children, she stood this February day before the heritage



she had discarded—and all its quiet beauty was swiftly turned to raging torment.

Regret the impulse that had driven her headlong from the train? The 'might have been,' breathing through the gathering chill of the late afternoon, called to her questioningly from every part of the tranquillity. In the question wistfulness vanished from her, torn away as swiftly as it had arisen. She regretted nothing, so she told herself fiercely, nothing at least that she had done or could of her own motion have altered. She had fled from John Harland, her husband, because her love was pierced with a poisoned arrow, and she had been in love with love, and could not be content with it stricken and ashamed. At whatever cost, she had met the challenge, she had kept her ideals high. And now she was swept with a poignancy of inverted gladness: certain it was that the lovelier the external beauty of the home that would have been hers, the higher internally those ideals had need to be. To have lived anywhere with a husband careless of the heights of marriage would have been to her a degradation: to have tried such life at Hartley Harland would have been purgatory indeed.

The old, swift, irrational anger against existence, that she had imagined she had left behind her for ever in the dreary swamps of the Laskers and Mr. Benton, leapt within her like a flame before the wind. And with it came a fear. By the providence of mercy Hartley Harland stood silent, shuttered, a great gray ghost, a shell without the little spark of life. 'There's no one at home'—so the old man had said, and 'it's little they bide here.' She had not committed the futility, or been faced with the cruelty, of wandering in upon the husband from whom she had fled: it need never be made known to him that she had come in secret, spying out the land. He was at the other end of the world, and she was as nothing to the old gardener.

How horrible it all was! The whole scene had undergone a grisly change: the silence mocked at her, the blind eyes of the great house grimaced at her, the trees looked coldly, scornfully down upon her, the chill of the February dusk came creeping against her. Calling to Felicity, snatching up Danny, she threw to the old man a hasty explanation of lateness and the need for an instant return, and fled down the terraces, across the garden, and into the field where she had left the perambulator as though her mind were possessed of evil and her spirit cold with fear.

*(To be continued.)*



# THE RUBBER BOTTEL.

AN OLD SONG RE-SUNG. *Air—The Leather Bottel.*



WHEN I survey the World around,  
The wondrous Things that do abound,  
The Ships that through the Air do cruise  
To bring us Meteorological News;  
Let forecasts prophesy all they can,  
'Tis frosty Nights are a Curse to man,  
So I wish him Joy where'er he dwell  
That first found out the Rubber Bottel.

Our rude Forefathers their Beds would heat  
With Sea-Coal glowing beneath the sheet;  
Neat-handed Phyllis and Warming-Pan  
Were boon and blessing to drowsy man;

But O if the Pan too long did stay,  
The Linen was scorcht and burnt away;  
*So I wish him Joy where'er he dwell*  
*That first found out the Rubber Bottel.*

And next our Fathers at night would pull  
Over their Ancles Socks of wool—  
For only in Wool was Safety seen  
In mid-Victorian Hygiene;  
But still they suffered, for all their pains,  
And Morning brought them fresh Chil-blains.  
*So I wish him Joy where'er he dwell*  
*That first found out the Rubber Bottel.*

Now what do you say to these Bottles of Stone?  
O none of the kind I ever will own;  
Hot-Water makes the ware too hot,  
Or else it cracks and spills the lot;  
But had it been in a Rubber Bottel,  
And the Stopper been tight, why, all had been well,  
*So I wish him Joy where'er he dwell*  
*That first found out the Rubber Bottel.*

And when your Bottle at length grows old  
And will Hot-Water no longer hold,  
'Twill make a soft and waterproof Thing  
To kneel upon when Gardening:  
And ere Elasticity quite expires,  
'Twill make you Patches to mend your Tyres;  
*So I wish in Heaven his Soul may dwell*  
*That first found out the Rubber Bottel.*



# PETTIFER'S POINT OF VIEW.

BY THE REV. P. B. CLAYTON, M.A., M.C.

*From 'Tales of Talbot House' we may learn that the actual Pettifer was 'a real old soldier,' nicknamed The General, known to the Army for thirty-one years as No. 239 Pte. Pettifer, A., 1st The Buffs, and sagacious past belief in the ways and by-ways of the Army, which he entered as a band-boy so long ago. When the Great War broke out he left his civilian retirement in South Hackney and rejoined the Buffs. After twelve months at the front when there were only some twenty-eight of the Buffs still with the regiment, he was ordered to report as batman to a new and unknown chaplain, but even this was better than the listening-post job he had volunteered for again and again. Having characteristically announced his inability to meet any domestic requirements, he soon developed unique capacities in that direction. His master became afraid to mention a need lest its unconsidered fulfilment should bring disaster and disgrace. But the 'scrounging' of the old campaigner was only of things lying useless and idle which none would miss. It was more than outweighed by a willingness to give of his own cheerfully, whether or not it could easily be spared. And though an old soldier might be expected to retain few illusions, he kept a secret faith in human nature and a tenderness for children and old folks, the helpless and the suffering, which expressed itself in act more easily than in word.*

IN a volume of Guildhall archives occurs a minor judgment against one Pedefer, who came to London from Wissant, near Calais, when Edward IV was king. Ex-Private Pettifer was outraged when I suggested here was his ancestor. Did I mean he was French? I quickly parried this grave alarm by pointing out that Calais was made English by Edward III; and that the family of Pettifer had without doubt gone over from Hackney for the siege and settled down since then upon the coast right opposite Dover, the Depot of the Buffs. This more or less contented him. It could be reconciled with his own conviction that he and many other Buffs in the East End of London are sprung from Roman Legionaries, who took their discharge in Essex, and made their homes outside the Tower-Aldgate section of the Wall. (I had unluckily thrown out this hint earlier on Tower Hill.) Now we have been together to the Orkneys, where spades again are trumps; and in

the intervals of excavation, 'the Gen' has been induced to dictate certain memoirs, which shed new light on Talbot House beginnings. The scribe has got him down verbatim for long passages on end. These I am now to edit, with succinct explanations.

# I.

Pettifer always boasts that he knew me long before I knew him; at least he heard me first. When called on to substantiate this statement, he made the deposition which ensues. The reader must understand that the Chaplains of VI Division were, when I joined them in November 1915, quartered in a well-ventilated hut upon the edge of Woods A. 30,<sup>1</sup> where each Brigade in turn came into C. Camp. Here Pettifer reluctantly obeyed the Buffs Adjutant detailing him as batman to the Brigade's new Chaplain.

Here is his own narration, called :—

## THE YOUNGSTER TEACHES 'EM.

'Three of us were left on guard over C. Camp. I'd been to get some water; and, coming back wet and muddy, heard someone ask where the West Yorks was. I knew afterwards it was Tubby by his voice. 'E was with Captain Bates. Later I was sent for and told to report to Chaplain Clayton of A.30. I'd no more idea what A.30 was than I could fly. About the only place I'd seen chaplains was at C. Camp; and it was in the hut we'd been guarding before it was put up, I found him. C. Camp turned out to be A.30 somehow, an' I anchored down for the morning.

'The first salute I got was from the cook. "'Ullo, youngster, you'll 'ave to go across the fields to get water." There was a pump two fields away, up to the knees in sticky mud. I got back with the water, and there was one of them chopping down a tree. So I ses: "What are you choppin' down that tree for?" "Oh," he ses, "to do the cookin'." So I asked him if he'd got enough to do the cooking, and he said he had, so I ses, "Don't chop no more trees down; the youngster 'll show you how to get fuel!" Later in the day I was dodging about without my overcoat on, and we were talking, the other servants and I, and the cook spotted my medal ribbon, and 'e looked and ses, "What ribbon's that?" So I told 'im, "The Punjab Frontier 1897-98," and the cook looked at the other servants and said, "We've bin callin' 'im the boy!" This raised a bit of a smile amongst them. I 'adn't minded, bein' the last among them.

<sup>1</sup> Between the Ypres and Elverdinghe roads, just west of Brandhoek.

'At night-time, when it got a bit quiet and all dark, I made me way over to the infantry lines where they kept the cookers, and against each wheel of each cooker was a sack of coal. I got the first sack on my back and trekked back to our place, planted that down, told them to hide it and went back for another one. When I was bringing the first one back through the wood, I met Tubby an' he asked, "What's that you've got?" I ses: "Sack of coal," an' he laughed and went on.

'I went back for the third sack, and got caught. I got half-way up the road with it when the company's cook came runnin' after me. "Where you goin' with that coal?" I give him the only five francs I'd got, and that was that.'

## II.

Two points must here be made by the clerical commentator. Coal was a prime necessity, however warm our hearts; and seeing that the Chaplain's hut was then the only room available for all and sundry—for the Church Army hut was not yet<sup>1</sup> roofed and ready—warmth was there widely shared. The cookers would not go without fresh supplies of fuel—Brigade Transport would see to that—but the measured ration for six Chaplains would not have warmed a flea. We shall hear more of coal acquisition on an ambitious scale. Pettifer's views of property are rigidly conservative, if so be that the thing really belongs to anyone about; but when it comes to common stores, provided by the home Government, he is a Robin Hood, concerned to place the booty where it will be most useful in relieving urgent need.

In this philanthropy, acting as self-appointed almoner to the tax-paying public, he found his stripes of very great assistance. The New Army were not always alive to the precise significance of six good-conduct badges; and on one desperate day, when Talbot House was burning wads of paper, Pettifer sallied forth. Here is his narrative:—

### THE THREE-TON LORRY OF COAL.

'It was the time when they were short o' coal, y' see; so Dr. Browne and Tubby had bin talkin' about where to get coal, and they sent for me and asked me could I get some? I told them I'd try, but I might have to buy from the Belgians at 150 francs a ton—if you could get it. Any road, I said I'd see what I could do. I went up to the station, and there 'appened to be a large

<sup>1</sup> November 1915.

corporal of the Engineers there wi' a lorry load. I asked him where 'e was goin' with the load, and 'e said 'e 'adn't any instructions; anywhere, but it was for the army. So I ses to 'im, "What about runnin' it up to Talbot 'Ouse?" 'E ses, "I don't care, so long as the army gets it." So I said, "The army'll get it orlright if you run it down to Talbot 'Ouse." He got it there, and backed it up the back road to the gate into the garden. I told 'im to shoot it down there and "my men" would shift it. "My men!" I said to 'im. I wish you'd 'eard me!

'I asked him, "Suppose you'd like a drink for this?" an' 'e said, "It's worth it, with a double lorry load like this,—well worth twenty francs!" "Will you be satisfied with eighty francs?" I said. So I went to Dr. Browne and told 'im I'd got a double lorry load, three tons, and I wanted eighty francs for it. He said, "That's all right, Gen," and give me eighty francs. And then 'e says, "I want a receipt for it!" Well, as the coal was pinched I 'ad to tell him I'd got it from the Belgians. "Get it in Belgian," ses 'e. I didn't know what to do. I went out and give the corporal 'is money and said, "I dunno what to do, they want a receipt in Belgian." "Orl right," ses he, "I can write Belgian." So he wrote the receipt out, and I was satisfied and didn't know what was on it, and gave it to Dr. Browne, and he seemed quite satisfied, and the lorry driver went away quite pleased with *himself*. . . . We get 'ome, an' I'm invited last year to Mark VII Guest Night. Dr. Browne happened to be speaking there, an' I asked him if he remembered the lorry of coal I got, and he says, "Yes, rather." 'You know I give you a receipt for it?' An' 'e says "yes"; and I ses, "Did you know what was on that receipt?" And he didn't know, no more than I. And that's where it died!

### III

If Armies are to become extinct, a stern school of gentle manners will be needed in their stead. The spirit of chivalry suffered with the closing of the tilt-yards; although, at first sight, there was small courtesy in spear-running. Yet sport is, next to death, the greatest solvent of that glacial epoch which freezes men into their fixed positions; and, when the hunt is flooded with new faces, old members exchange courtesies, simply to show it's done.

Now when the War began, Neville Talbot was Chaplain and Fellow of Balliol, and Pettifer was driving a cart in Hackney. But both men had seen active service, before we others knew the

fashion of a Brigade. This was a bond of mutual confidence, expressed in elementary jocundities between them. Wit is the rapier weapon, which pierces without sound. But clumsy quarter staves make a more jovial clatter; and Neville had a mind which did not remember inconveniently that batmen are best silent.

Here follow two of Pettifer's narrations, devoid of subtle wit, but indicating atmosphere:—

'When Neville came once he 'ad a tiny little flask, so I looked at it with longin' eyes and thought to myself, "it's no good to him." I left it there for a couple of days, and he didn't seem to want it, so I drank it and filled his flask up with water. Then he suddenly got a bit of a cold and did want it, but I 'ad the first cold an' he didn't get it. Of course when 'e looked for 'is rum, it was only water. So 'e sent for me, an' I ses, "Yessir, you want me?" "Ah, yes, you dear old Buff." "Good old Corps, the Rifle Brigade,"<sup>1</sup> I said—not meaning it, of course. 'E looks at me with such a face and ses, "You know, Gen, I'd a little flask of rum 'ere." I said, "I know you did." 'E said, "What happened to it?" I said, "I drank it." 'E said, "What for?" "Because I 'ad a cold." "That's what I wanted it for, but you need not 'ave filled it up with water." So I ses to 'im, "Parsons mustn't 'ave rum for colds." And 'e ses then, "What must parsons 'ave?" I looked at 'im nearly burstin' with laughin', and ses to 'im—"Gruel and boiled onions." And 'e ses to me, "*Get out of it, the Buffs are no good!*" And as I went out of the door I ses to 'im, "Rotten lot, the Rifle Brigade."'

'Another time, 'e came before they had the Officers' Club<sup>2</sup>—an' we used to 'ave felt slippers. An' 'e came unexpectedly. I put 'im upstairs and give 'im a bed, put 'im comfortable and went downstairs. I 'adn't been down long when 'e rang a bell. I guessed what 'e wanted, a pair of slippers. "Yessir?" 'E said, "You dear old Buff," and I said, "Good old corps, the Rifle Brigade." "'Ave you a pair of slippers for me?" "I 'ave, sir." An' the only pair I 'ad left was fives, and 'e took about twenty-fives. I took them up and put them down at the side of 'is bed—'e was finishing 'is prayers. "There you are, sir." "Thank you, ole man." So I went downstairs an' 'ung about, cos I knew any minute I'd 'ave to go over the top. I didn't 'ave to wait long.

<sup>1</sup> Neville Talbot held a commission in the Rifle Brigade in the South African war.

<sup>2</sup> June 1916.



The bell rang. Up I went, my sides burstin' with laughin'. There 'e was at the side of the bed, kickin' out like a two-year-old, like this, 'ands on the bed and kickin' out for all 'e's worth, sayin', "The slippers are no good, the Buffs are no good." An' I ses, "No more is the Rifle Brigade!" and out I bolted!

When there is sunlight, then also there are shadows. Students of humour know that the past-masters have dealt in pathos fruitfully. Hood, Jerome, Barry Pain—they can dissolve the reader in tears as readily as in smiles. Let them lay aside their shaft of ridicule, and the bowstring which launched it becomes the harp in season. A strong sense of the ridiculous never need harden hearts; and Pettifer, caught in a serious mood, is not to be forgotten. The old man's honest feeling shines through such conversations as the two which follow quietly.

'After we were comin' out from Hooze about the twelfth of May 1915, comin' along they 'appened to be shelling the town with a large gun, just seventeen minutes between each explosion. An' we were comin' out and found a little girl on the roadway. She'd been buried and blown out again—buried quick I should say, in 'er clothes, about six years old.

'It was a bit of a cemetery just there, an' I took this youngster an' rolled 'er in my overcoat an' buried 'er.

'An' I think it would be some time in '16 I told Tubby about this an' we thought we'd look for 'er. We looked about, but we never could find it again. The place was blown to bits.'

Now hear him in an incident concerning some lost washing. Remember that the narrative, for all the strict economy of words, is told by one who stood year in year out as the best British friend to all and sundry among the civil populace. During the bombardments, he visited the bedridden, took them illicit scraps of Army rations, filled them with wildly optimistic legends of the course of the War, and came out to discover his usual troop of children waiting for his protection.

'One day they were shellin' Pop an' I run down to the old lady—the old lady who done 'is washing—out of the back gate of the garden an' down the lane an' the 'ouses just facin'.

'I went down to see if the washin' was finished, an' the old lady sed it would be about another half-hour if I'd call back for it, an' I said I would. There was a long report, quarter of an hour after I came away, an' I went out of the back gate, an' it 'ad been a

shell ; it 'ad gone clean in the ole girl's 'ouse and 'er an' 'er daughter were blown to pieces. So we never got no washin'.'

The reader still awake will have observed that Pettifer's conversations have dealt so far with minor incidents, in gaiety or pathos. The final stencil is cut more soberly. It tells of an event which threatened to part us finally. Had this been so, Toc H would scarcely have survived to be reborn.

To understand what follows, the student must stomach the reminder that Pettifer and I had become glued together by an act of generosity on the part of the Buffs Adjutant in 1915. In April 1916, the Buffs went south, leaving us both behind them. Divisions came and went. Corps moved majestically. Even the Armies shifted. But Pettifer and I remained in Poperinghe together. Neither of us had any secure status. We were attached in turn to neighbouring units, and drew official breath as best we could. Like Romulus and Remus, we chose our she-wolf cautiously, exercising tact towards her proper progeny, for fear they might dispute our 'mucking in.' Some sleepy she-wolves nurtured us benignly, some with an air of boredom or resentment. Some wanted to see papers. For these last, we kept a stock of earlier affiliation orders, blazing with rubber stamps and signatures of alphabetic eminence within the tribe of 'Q.' 'Padré and batman'—that was plain enough. 'Rations and discipline'—yes, both were good for men. But who and what was Private Pettifer, with six good-conduct stripes ? Was he a Buff in perpetuity, like the Editor of the *Eatanswill Independent* ? Or was he pledged to those who paid and clothed and fed him ? He could not be officially a gadget, a general member of the British Army. No post like this existed. Again, was he unfit ? And, if so, was it permanent ? Or was he now too old to stand the racket ? Had the Buffs any right thus to deposit him, a Regimental heirloom ? Adjutants swooned at this ; Staff Majors ordered whiskey and wet towels. For two whole years I trembled, but I triumphed. Then Fortune's malice fell.

In the autumn of '17, there was a fierce re-combing of men behind the line. At home, great drafts of fresh men were kept back ; while thousands such as Pettifer were summoned to the Base, their wounds pooh-poohed, despite the doctors' evidence, their return to the line made instant. They did not even get back to their old battalions, but went (more often than not) to die among strange faces. This was the cross they bore.

So Pettifer went from me. He had been oh ! so careful and brief in his farewell. When he had heard that he must go, he fell to work at once on his equipment, and came to say good-bye, fully accoutred. A handshake, a salute, and he was gone. I can still see his figure fading towards the Square.

No one could pass him fit. That was my sole sheet-anchor ; and, for some weeks of loneliness, I went on importuning the highly-placed magicians to conjure him back to me. But those I knew were neighbours, powerful only in Flanders ; Pettifer had now passed out of the Army area down to the Base, where friendship was a fable. I was, however, told that should he reappear in any local unit, he should be mine once more, if certified unfit.

Pettifer did not write. Apart from sundry letters to my mother, composed and re-composed for weeks on end, I scarcely know his hand. One night I crawled to bed, and woke to find him standing like a spirit, grave and outworn, at the bed's foot. He said he had just called in to see me ! He was up the line again, digging as best he could with a lot who called themselves Camerons, but were a Labour Company. The Base, he'd had enough of it. Starving and shivering in St. Martin's Camp, suspected of faint-heartedness, his unread papers seized—he said his say right out to me that night. I learnt how men grow bitter. Mistrust soon makes them so.

So he had joined 'The Camerons,' keeping his cap-badge and his self-respect. He had asked to be sent back to the Buffs, wherever they might be ; but his medical report was prohibitory. A 'P.B.' man had no right in a Labour Company working far up the line.

Where had he come from now ? What were they doing ? He told me briefly, and made shift to go. I fastened on him firmly, trusting my private promise from the good magician. His story tells the sequel.

'I was taken away, that was September 17, 1917, from Tubby and sent to the Base to be re-classified with a letter from 'im to 'and in, to have me sent back to 'im again. I 'anded the letter in to one of the sergeant-majors there, but whether the letter got 'anded in or not, I wasn't sent back to Tubby. So I was marked P.B. (permanent base) and put to a labour company in the Camerons, and got sent up to Dickebusch, an' I knew that if I could get down to Tubby I should be orl right.

'So after some bit of trouble I managed to get a pass to go into

Pop and o' course made my way straight to Tubby. So 'e ses to me, "Now I've got you I'm goin' to keep you." So I said to 'im, "You can't do that, I'm only on a few hours leave and I've got to go up the line workin'" (we were makin' a road called the Warrington Road just off our corner).

'Tubby ses to me, "You come with me and we'll go and see a doctor." 'E took me to see a doctor in the "roo dee Furnes," an' 'e went in first and saw this doctor, and 'e ses I'm unfit to travel. An' next day they sent a dispatch rider to Tubby to say "send Pte. Pettifer back"—Tubby sent a message back to say "the doctor's orders are, he's unfit to travel,"—and then my transfer from the 2nd Army to the 5th came through an' was sent to the company; and the nex' message was "Send Private Pettifer up to bring his kit away!" An' I went up and got my kit, and the Captain 'ad gone on leave that mornin', or I dessay I'd 'ave got a tickin' orf. I guess 'e knew it was a wangle.'

This was the last of Pettifer's war stories; but I am moved to add two incidents in my own defence. My deliberate infractions of Army Law were very rare indeed. One day, however, Talbot House received a stray lance-corporal, discovered scanning most excitedly the Rendez-vous lists, of which the headlines still remain painted in the hall opposite the kitchen door. These lists were a device whereby men could acquaint their friends in other units with their prospective presence, and thus hope to achieve a meeting. Lance-Corporal Quin found to his tense amazement that his own brother had been in the House the previous day. He had not known till now. They had not met since 1914. Could he now be found and summoned? I took fire at this, and went to the Town Major. There I learnt that the brother's battalion had just moved to Abeele, on their way south. I took a Signal form and (with an element of connivance) drafted a most official wire to the Adjutant of the brother's battalion, demanding that Pte. Quin should be sent back immediately to the Town Major's Office. No reason was vouchsafed. I wonder what the Adjutant conjectured. But, sure enough, it worked; and the two brothers met in Talbot House that very afternoon. It was well they did, for one was killed soon afterwards. This was the sole occasion when I deliberately deceived the British Army, making no bones about it.

The second reminiscence is perplexing. It all began with the small billiard-table, which came from Messrs. Gamage. Billiards are

made for men, not men for billiards ; and I had cause to regret that most seductive table before long. There was the furore of its first arrival, when—to judge from the talk of the unpacking party—Inman had been the pupil of them all. Then, for a week or so, the room in which it stood was inaccessible, a solid throng of hopefuls : the butt-end of the cues plying a doubtful passage. Imagine every beast owned by the Zoo given freedom to congregate, and in turn to drink out of a six-foot tank during a water famine, and you are not far from picturing the proceedings in that billiard-room. News spread, and callers multiplied. We did not feel at home with them, for they had come with one intention only. By now, the precious table was moved up for more space to the floor below the Chapel. I was not quite happy about this, since sound (like gas) will rise, and that of cannons is peculiarly penetrating. Billiards, like other games, ceased by the strict traditions of the House during family prayers ; but I found that at other times the Chapel stillness suffered.

What did we do on Sundays about billiards ? The answer to that question must appear unbelievable to an age which is parting with every inhibition against Sunday pleasure. The solemn fact, however, is that I put this issue (like all others) to the men most affected. They weighed the pro and con of Sunday billiards, and voted clean against it. I was amazed at this, but carried out their self-denying ordinance. A few Sundays later two infantrymen turned up with passes from the other side of Ypres. This was their one day off, after a very rough turn of duty. They had come quite openly for billiards, to the sole English table available in Flanders. What should I say ? I wavered. I told them that a general vote of the players had been taken, and that they had decided to leave the table covered every Sunday. I added that they were welcome, if they wished, to say ' this rule does not apply to two men coming, as we have come, out of the line, and for a single afternoon, which happens to be Sunday afternoon.' I left them to decide. Once more, these two men came to the unexpected verdict. They said unitedly, that as the other players had decided, they would themselves abide by this decision. This humbled me a lot.

The little table prospered mightily, but proved a constant worry. Conceive of the accessories, fetched from their guardian Jimmy Moorhouse in the kitchen, and then too much required to be returned. Ponder the untipped cues, chalked by the simple process of thrusting them aloft against the plaster ceiling. Imagine, not too accurately, the emblematic language !

Now Talbot House was known to be a place free from this style of talk. Action was necessary, and on the board below I advertised for someone strong enough to act as overseer and C.-in-C. of billiards. A lithe Australian corporal, with three wound-stripes, whom I had seen about the House for some days past, came in and volunteered. I asked him for particulars. He told me he was a patient at No. 17 C.C.S.,<sup>1</sup> allowed out in the daytime, and at night occasionally. I answered this would suit me admirably, provided the Commanding Officer gave him a signed sanction. This he produced next day, stamped and correct, and it was duly filed with other Staff attachments in my cupboard. The cupboard was unlocked; keys were almost unknown in Talbot House. Weeks passed, and every day my good friend Corporal Henry presided over billiards. Himself no mean performer, he ruled the roost completely. I heard him do it once, and was horrified to find that his remedy for bad language was so homœopathic that the green baize turned blue. I felt inclined to creep away and wonder, but read myself a lesson in deportment, and went and 'told him off.' He took it penitently, and checked himself and others. After that incident, he (for the first time) climbed into the Chapel. I did not welcome him. He was too raw and too uncomfortable. He took to coming often. By and by, I had a talk with him there.

An element of mystery hung round the man. Handsome and devil-may-care, he played his part most faithfully and with a growing understanding. The House and its ideals had been Greek to him; but he was coming on. He was the Esau-type, intolerant of any kind of softness. But when he met a man, he met his fellow, and measured him with promptitude for friend or foe. Australians love or hate.

Then the blow fell. One autumn afternoon in '17, two military police came to the Chaplain's room. I knew and liked them both. I told them to get chaired; their answer brought me out of mine. They had come on duty for Corporal Henry, a deserter. First, for my part in this. Where was my authority for harbouring him? How came he on the Staff of Talbot House? I took my Staff file—a metal skewer pricked through a sheaf of papers—from the cupboard. The C.C.S. attachment had been torn away, as a mere scrap of it remaining proved quite clearly. I told them it was stamped and signed by the Commanding Officer. They said the stamp had possibly been 'come by,' but that the signature had been a forgery. I rang my bell for Pettifer; but Henry himself came up.

<sup>1</sup> 17 Casualty Clearing Station, just behind Poperinghe.



He strode in in his shirt-sleeves, with all the grace of movement characteristic of the man. 'You wanted something?' he began to say, and then he saw the trap. I'll not forget his face. The two men closed with him; but his strength and desperation were such that he almost beat them back. Had he been armed—and he had a pistol in his pack upstairs—he would have killed and died. I cried out to him that I hadn't planned his capture, that I was still his friend. The handcuffs now snapped upon his wrists. He stood a prisoner, silent. Then 'May I get my coat? It's in the kitchen. I promise to come back.' His captors laughed at the idea. I went and fetched it, brokenly. The man meant much to me. I told him so, as best I could. I told him that I knew about the stolen paper. He said sadly, 'I wish I'd told you everything.' The escort took him out.

I never saw him again. He lies (I fancy) in some French-British cemetery. His grave may be unknown. Unknown, but not dishonoured; for a strange aftermath brought me, not 'everything,' but things I longed to hear.

His trial as a deserter was conducted in the Australian area, then down south. My part in the proceedings was spared me, first by the fact that my own ignorance, in view of his efficient forgery, was admitted; secondly, through my illness at the time. His own unlikely story was found to be correct. Since he had left Australia, he had had cause to know his wife was faithless. She was now living with another man. He had been wounded twice—that also was quite accurate. And, in the next attack, after he heard the news, he was reported killed. Actually, he had slipped his identity disc on a dead man, and himself vanished utterly, leaving her free to marry.

They sentenced him to a long imprisonment; but, when in 1918, the Australian Corps faced the carrying of Mt. St. Quentin, they sent some prisoners back to their battalions. Henry was one of these. A few days later, I had a letter from him, telling me this, and that he hoped his conduct in that attack would clear his character. This letter lived with me, in my small case, and travelled to Australia and home again. It was then lost at Sheffield. No other letter followed; and some discreet inquiries led me to believe that Corporal Henry fell—a foolish word—soon after it was written.

See, I have maundered on, without another word from Pettifer, who really owns this chapter. He will forgive the trespass. Yes, Pettifer will forgive, for he knew Henry well.

# STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH.

BY THOMAS CAMBORNE.

'JUDDY' BROUGHTON at twenty-two was small in stature and inclined to pimples. Mothers of daughters considered him 'a dear little chap' and, because he rode well, certain aggressive 'horsy' men pronounced him the best of good fellows. I might possibly acquit the men, but certainly not the mothers, of being influenced by the thought that he would one day have ten thousand a year of his own. I personally thought him an awful little tick, and have reason to believe that I was not alone in my opinion.

For my sins—I had been staying in his father's house—I was travelling up to London with him, and in sheer self-defence I had started to converse with the stranger who shared our compartment. I think I was encouraged by the obvious disapproval of Juddy, who appeared to consider it most irregular that I should have any traffic with one who had not obviously been to Eton. But the stranger interested me, and it is part of my profession to cultivate people who do.

I judged him to be in the early thirties, and accustomed to horses. His costume, a coat rather long in the skirt and trousers cut close to the knee, succeeded without being the least bit horsy in suggesting just that familiarity with the stable which Juddy and his kind, for all their horsiness, could never adequately counterfeit. He seemed at first sight a hard-bitten sort of cove, but his conversation revealed a slight nervousness of gesture, as if he were preoccupied with something in himself which he knew was amiss.

It happened, as our express thundered past a wayside station, that a horse left unattended in a dogcart reared up between the shafts. That horse must have seen a train—probably the same train—scores of times before; horses, I suggested, were stupid animals. The stranger disagreed with me, and we started a discussion.

Juddy entrenched his beastly little self behind a newspaper. This we did not mind. But we did object to the way he rustled it when we continued to ignore him. My companion very diffidently suggested a move to the dining-car, and I promptly agreed. We went in search of whisky and soda, leaving Juddy to blush unseen.

The stranger insisted on paying for my drink. And as the twilight deepened and we left the West of England behind us, he certainly told me some quite interesting facts which had previously

escaped my notice: that foals entirely changed their colour when they got their second coats, that it was dangerous to hog your horse's mane and thus leave him unprotected from the sun; that pin-firing generally improved his eyesight, and that sailors had their children's ears pierced for the same reason.

We finished our drink and the question of a second one arose. He wanted to pay again, but this time I insisted that I must have some change, as I had nothing left but paper. I took out my notecase and paid.

I had sensed all the time that these general remarks were preliminary to some more intimate disclosure, and I was not disappointed. Before the restaurant car had even begun to fill for dinner he had shown me a photograph of himself on a horse in hunting clothes.

'A favourite of yours?' I asked him.

'He was more than a favourite,' my companion replied. 'He was a friend. I lost him not very long ago, and if it wouldn't bore you I should like to tell you his story. It is rather a curious one.'

I give you the tale as he told it to me, but unbroken by the slamming of plates and the malevolent glances of Juddy, who had somewhat pointedly taken a seat at the other end of the car. It lasted through dinner and till long after the other diners had faded away. I give it as nearly word for word as I can remember.

'Tattersall's catalogue' (he began) '—which drew a veil of conventional, and possibly merciful, obscurity over *Bismark's* more distant past—described him as a "good hunter" and the "property of a gentleman"; the latter point being hotly disputed by Tommy Rose, who bought him at "Tat's" without a warranty.

'Tommy—I daresay you know him—is one of whom it is oracularly said, "he knows a horse when he sees one." By which I suppose is meant that if you put a cow and a horse side by side he would be able to tell you every time which was the cow and which was the horse—for sad experience has taught me that it cannot mean very much more. He gave sixty pounds for *Bismark*, and considered he had made a very good bargain, for although he was an ugly horse one or two of those present at the sale were moved to wonder if he had not at some period been known to the public by another name. The fact that Tommy subsequently sold him for half that amount rather took the gilt off the gingerbread so far as Tommy was concerned.

' *Bismark* certainly was "a good hunter," so far as jumping went. Tommy took him out with the Quorn and he jumped everything within five miles of the cover in which they found, though not, unfortunately for Tommy, in the same direction as the hounds. Or perhaps it *was* fortunate for Tommy, because the Quornites might not have liked his hunting their fox on his own like Brigadier Gerard.

' When he at last managed to pull *Bismark* up—or in other words when *Bismark* had had enough—he dismounted; and after saying a few things which, as he told me afterwards, came into his head and appeared germane to the occasion, led him as far as the nearest road and quietly home.

' His next owner was Charles Morley, running a small pack then which he could barely afford, and always on the look-out for cheap horses even if they were a little "rough." After his first ride on *Bismark* Charles returned home white and shaken, having deserted his hounds while they were still drawing, to the astonishment of the field and the mortification of his groom, whose proud boast it was that "the Master could ride a bit."

' But like so many horses who cannot be trusted with the grass under their feet, *Bismark* was a quiet and confidential hack. From the ignominy of being shot and eaten he was rescued by a doctor in the neighbourhood, still old-fashioned enough to do his rounds on horseback, in whose service *Bismark* conducted himself soberly for two whole years—until one fateful day when hounds ran far into this usually unhunted part of the country.

' The Doctor was hacking quietly along, smoking his pipe and ruminating gently on the infinite when, for no apparent reason, *Bismark* whipped round on his quarters and negotiated an immense drop into a ploughed field. The Doctor had barely recovered from this first shock when he found himself being catapulted at speed down a steep hill with a river at the bottom. On the other side of it were a lot of pied dogs and some people in red coats.

' His pipe and his hat had gone past recall, but he had great courage. He dug the fingers of one hand into *Bismark's* mane, and made a grab with the other at his stethoscope which was oozing like a black snake out of his pocket. It is alleged by certain members of the hunt that he used it to help *Bismark* over the brook; in fact, he gained quite a reputation for hard riding (although he belonged to the Dumb Friends League and disapproved of hunting on principle) in the brief minutes that passed before a

combination of fear and fatigue compelled him to leave the saddle and take refuge in a convenient manure heap.

'I was staying at the Kennels when *Bismark* arrived there, late that evening and riderless. We rang up and told the Doctor, suggesting that he should send for him the following day. But from what the Doctor said over the telephone we very roughly gathered that he had no such intention, and furthermore that if *Bismark* returned of his own accord, which he was fully capable of doing, there would be no warm bed and carrots waiting for him; that the Doctor was going to buy a motor-car, and that if he ever saw *Bismark* again he would shoot him.

'We treated *Bismark* kindly, not having been on his back. I think he had a guilty conscience, and was already growing a little nervous as to what his fate might be. He put his nose inside my coat when we went to have a look at him.

'I was then by way of being a good horseman. Lately, I am afraid, my nerve has rather deserted me . . . but I am coming to that.

'It was agreed that I should ride *Bismark* with Charles's hounds the following Monday; and if he succeeded in getting away with me—well, there was nothing else for it—he would become dog's meat. I felt a certain responsibility. I decided that to be fair on the horse I must ride him out to the meet, so that we might get on terms with one another before the presence of the hunt excited him.

'The demeanour of Charles's head groom when he helped me into the saddle on Monday morning was not calculated to inspire confidence. He had had the handling of *Bismark* two years before, when Charles had purchased him and been so ignominiously bolted with. I think he expected history to repeat itself. A slight feeling of uneasiness betrayed me into a question I should normally have disdained.

"What is the trouble with this horse?" I asked him. I meant, of course, was it fright or just cussedness.

"Well, sir," was the reply, "he's one of those that can't stand interference. It makes him see red. He won't be really happy till he's killed someone."

'After that, as you may imagine, I felt perfectly splendid.

'I noticed at the meet that everyone gave me a wide berth, and when we moved off to draw even Charles seemed purposely to have forgotten my existence. However, I did not want company. I kept *Bismark* well away from the other horses; but he alternately

stood stock-still, quivering with emotion, and waltzed in vertiginous curves. Although I was a little apprehensive of what lay ahead of me it was almost with relief that I heard Charles's horn calling them to the line, the whip's piping "GERaway-onto-him" and a moment later, the music of the bitch pack on a breast-high scent.

'The field in my immediate vicinity stampeded for a gate at the end of an ugly looking black fence, a rough affair of growing thorn fortified with thick ash binders and beyond that a tall oxer which I could see but which I fancied *Bismark* could not. I felt it in my bones that he would have it all right, although it certainly was a big one; and I was not innocent of the thought that he might put himself down. A shaking would steady him, and—if he really was that rare bird, an incorrigible runaway—give me a better chance of redeeming his character. I was being cruel to be kind.

'But left to himself, he cleared it handsomely, landing well out into the next field. I was conscious of one or two heads turned in my direction. The meanest hunt are jealous of their reputation, and Charles's people rather fancied themselves. At the sight of a stranger "handing it out to them" they grew a little hot and bothered. Three or four people set out to show me that I had gained nothing by my bravado. They proceeded to shout "Wire" at the tops of their voices as I approached the fence which lay between me and the hounds.

'There was little choice in the matter, so I let him have it; but although he jumped big I heard the wire twang behind me. The hounds were disappearing over the brow of the next hill. We followed.

'I found that I could steer *Bismark*, and by crossing my reins over his withers—a trick I generally deplore—exercise a certain control over his pace. But there the matter ended. I had reason to be glad that he was not in hard condition. For the first time my heart went out to the Doctor, and if I did not actually look out for a marshy spot in which to dismount—for I was enjoying myself—I at least began to wonder if the twilight would find me, like John Gilpin, still galloping madly.

'Where he did not, with that stupidity peculiar to the horse, choose the biggest or most trappy places in a fence, I found myself unconsciously seeking them out for him. We jumped wire on several occasions, so that we left Charles and his first whip, who always rode with his neck to spare, some way behind us.



'It thus happened that I was alone when hounds ran their fox to earth in a deeply wooded valley. I did not feel called upon to do anything. I got off *Bismark* and walked him slowly along the side of a grass field that looked down into the hollow. I came to a halt with his rein over my arm, and lit a cigarette.

"*You can ride,*" said a voice close to my elbow.

'I said "Thanks very much; good gallop, wasn't it," or something of the sort, and turned to see who had come up so quietly and was paying me such fulsome compliments. But there was nobody there, and I was naturally a little surprised when the voice continued. "Yes," it said. "I enjoyed that. Most people would have tried to stop me." I then realised that it was *Bismark* who was addressing me.

'I remember that at the time it seemed quite ordinary. I felt it owing to him that I should say something pleasant in return. "You jumped magnificently," I said; and I said it with a rich sincerity. I very nearly offered him a cigarette, but it occurred to me that he probably did not smoke.

"*I like jumping,*" he declared. "Most horses don't, y' know; they just do it to oblige.—I say, hang on to the reins," for I had dropped them in deference to our sudden and startling arrival at social equality. "You see," he explained, "people will think it odd if you don't.

"What is more," he added, "you'd better not talk to me whilst others are about."

"Don't you think that's foolish?" I said. "You might make a lot of money if you joined a circus." But the disgusted snort with which he greeted my suggestion made it clear that such a course would be beneath his dignity.

"I won't mention it again," I said.

"I'll thank you not to," he replied curtly. "By the way, I said that you rode well; but even you pulled my mouth about on one or two occasions. Why don't you leave it *all* to me?"

'I saw very clearly that unless I did something to assert my superiority I should be like wax in *Bismark's* hands—or beneath his hoofs, as perhaps I should say. "I wasn't too keen about your jumping certain places because they were wired," I explained to him.

"*Wired—what do you mean?*"

'He had played into my hands. I adopted a superior air and graphically described some of the dreadful injuries a horse might

sustain through taking liberties with barbed wire ; I even took pains to enlarge upon the gruesome details of an accident I had seen, because horses, of course, are notoriously blind, and I knew that my ability to see wire would make him to a certain extent dependent upon me. I even made fun of him a little for having reached the mature age for a horse of eight years and yet not understood the meaning of those warning cries which fell upon his deaf ears every time he appeared in the hunting field.

“ I suppose,” he said at last, “ that we took some pretty bad risks this morning.”

‘ I nodded and smiled.

“ —Then you shouldn't have allowed it,” he declared, with the capricious violence of one who has been frightened suddenly.

“ You weren't very tractable,” I pointed out. He had to admit his fault, and for the moment he appeared satisfied.

‘ The situation had such infinite possibilities that I was on edge lest I should do or say anything to compromise my own position. *Bismark*, for all his ugliness, was a well-bred horse, and I doubt that any amateur rider can ever have been exposed to baser temptations than those which harassed me as I stood talking to him. We could win big steeplechases together, for the economy of effort in a horse who never had to be checked or driven but who could be instructed when to hang back and when to go ahead would be worth at least a stone ; while a word in his ear every now and then not to try too hard in any given race would effectually puzzle the handicapper. I need not even ride him myself. And to prevent any unpleasant accusations being levelled against his jockey, he could be ridden by a different man each month of the jumping season.

‘ For the time being I kept these thoughts to myself, but I decided that if my plans were to come to anything I must from the outset show very clearly that I was master. “ We'd better go home now,” I said rather sharply. “ You're not fit, and you've had quite enough for one day.”

“ Home—yes,” he replied as I set my foot in the stirrup, “ but I think that you'd better lead me. This light saddle of yours has given me a sore back.”

‘ People say that the horse is a generous animal, but it is significant that I detected then a glint in *Bismark's* eye which moved me to doubt his statement. It was no good arguing with him. I just lowered my right hand and had the girth undone and the saddle over my arm before he could protest.

'It was as I had suspected; he had been lying to me. He mumbled some excuse about dirt on the saddle, which I greeted with the silence it deserved. I was in the act of regirthing him when I was startled by a shadow falling across my face, and a woman's voice that I had come to know rather well. It was Mrs. Seymour—Mollie Seymour, two years a widow but, since the majority of us had eyes in our heads, not likely to remain one for very much longer. She had ridden up and was watching me curiously.

'“Who were you talking to just now?” she asked, and the corners of her mouth twitched with a suggestion of amusement.

'I could hardly say that I had been talking to my own horse, at least not in that conversational tone, so I clutched at the first excuse that came into my head—a particularly lame one. I told her I was repeating to myself the words of a monologue which I had promised to recite at a concert to be given shortly for the British Legion. Obviously she did not believe me, but thought I was a bit eccentric and had been talking to myself. I saw from the evasive look in her eyes that she had reached this conclusion, and it pained me because I particularly wished to stand well with her.

'Without beating about the bush I will say that it was my intention to marry Mrs. Seymour if she would have me. I had never before looked upon myself much as a marrying man, having spent most of my time in the company of other bachelors. I do not mean that I had ever shied away from the permanency of marriage; but it had never occurred to me that any lady of quality would ever for any length of time endure the company of such a coarse stupid fellow as myself. Mrs. Seymour had, by her gracious ways and the use of that rare quality which can best be described as *simpatica*, reawakened in me sentiments long dormant.

'She was dark and tall and hawk-eyed, one of the few women I have seen who could wear a top-hat and get away with it. She looked as smart as paint in the saddle; and yet she was not one of “that” sort, for her lips were never painted and her mouth was soft and womanly—so that a hooligan like myself felt some compunction in being with her, as if it were under false pretences.

'I flushed with pleasure when she congratulated me on the way I had ridden *Bismark*. She was a splendid horsewoman, and although I was no boy her praise was worth having.

'By now several others had joined us. A nuisance, because they too insisted on talking to me about *Bismark*, whereas I wanted to get away and hear *Bismark* talk about himself. I was beginning

to wonder if my excited state had not moved me to imagine the whole of our previous conversation.

'I was reassured as to his exceptional powers as soon as we were alone on our way home, for he promptly took me to task for a chance remark I had made deprecating my own mastery of him. A certain Colonel Scott-Harbord, who wrote books about horses, had suggested that he merely needed a bold man to pilot him; and, thinking no harm, I had agreed. *Bismark* was furious about this. "I don't *want* to be ridden by anyone else," he expostulated.

'After thinking for a minute or two I assured him that such an arrangement would suit me perfectly, although I was not prepared for the suggestion which promptly followed.

"I think you'd better buy me," he said.

"Well, I don't know about that," I demurred. "You might be rather expensive." This was true, for now it had been demonstrated that he *could* be managed, Charles would probably have other offers for him. However, *Bismark* solved this difficulty by promising to behave so badly when anyone else tried to hunt him that there would be no possible difficulty in my buying him at the end of a month.

'Here, I am afraid, my commercial instincts began to assert themselves. I reasoned that if I waited long enough Charles would eventually give him to me. At first *Bismark* did not much care about this: he was repelled by the idea of becoming a gift. However, I assured him that it was not *infra dig.*, reminding him that Sergeant Murphy, winner of a Grand National, had cost his owner nothing. I racked my brains for the names of other gift horses who had won classic races, and worked upon him with honeyed words till we reached an inn, where we pledged our immoral compact, myself in a glass of beer and *Bismark* in a bottle, which I poured down his throat. Once horses acquire a taste for beer they will swallow it greedily. I nearly offered him a second bottle, but feared that it might be creating a precedent.

'The beer induced in him a gentle melancholy as we walked home along the deserted lanes. "Look here," he said to me after a long silence, "you'll treat me decently, won't you?—I'm giving away a good deal. I mean to say, you won't go away like the Doctor did and leave me in the hands of an incompetent gardener for weeks on end?"

'I assured him that my stable, though small, was managed with scrupulous care, and that the comfort of its inmates was more concern to me even than my own.

"That sounds all right," he said. "What other visitors have you?"

"It was a second or two before I grasped his meaning.

"An old horse who used to be a steeplechaser," I then replied, "and a little chestnut mare."

"Is she nice looking?" he asked carelessly.

"Well——" I affected to be extremely judicial, "some people admire her tremendously, though I prefer them with a little more bone."

"Personally I appreciate refinement. How old is she?"

"Rising five," I told him, "*And*," I added, "very high spirited."

He played suddenly with his bit, as if pleased with what I had told him. "There isn't a mare in this stable under nine years old," he confided to me. "But I say——" a sudden anxiety entered his voice, "what about this other horse?"

"I'm not quite sure," I said, "but I don't think he'll ever see thirteen again. And he's not in the Book."

"*Bismark* sighed complacently. "No danger from that quarter," he remarked. We were now within sight and hearing of the stables and our conversation necessarily came to an end.

"Since it has been suggested that subsequent events affected my memory, I should like to make it quite clear that my first conversation with *Bismark* took place some days before I proposed to Mollie Seymour. At first I did not dare suppose that the warm delight I felt in her presence was in any way returned. Perhaps I was too humble. But there came a day when I plucked up my courage and offered her my devotion—for, my income being but a quarter of hers, I could not offer her very much else. I had thought the matter out, and it seemed to me that it was an impertinence which must be risked; and, after all, if she did not want to marry me she could always say so.

"I cannot find words to express my happiness when I learnt that, far from being disturbed at my presumption, she had begun to grow coldly afraid that the regard which she read in my behaviour—and which she warmly returned—was but a delusion arising from the depth of her own feelings. Were I a younger man I might enlarge on the happiness we found in one another, but I am old enough to know, and be thankful, that the joy of realised affection is not so uncommon as the cynics of our age would have us believe.

"For all my preoccupation I yet found time to appreciate *Bismark*; and his peculiar gift of speech was the one secret which

I never shared with her. I think her admiration of my riding was augmented rather than tempered by my odd way of talking to my horse—which at least was wonderfully effective. I stayed on at the Kennels, and we often rode close to one another in the hunting field. She had the impression that I had trained him to obey certain words of command, and he gained quite a reputation as a safe jumper of barbed wire. Our perfect understanding enabled us to go almost anywhere.

‘But his behaviour when other people rode him was atrocious. Charles, of course, had to try him out again after his going so nicely for me. I told him to let Charles down lightly, a request upon which he set his own interpretation—for he ran under a tree and scraped him off among his own hounds. In getting rid of more experienced riders he displayed a hardened cunning entirely foreign to his old self, which made me a little anxious for my own safety. I made a point of impressing on him more than once that if he tried any tricks with me he would infallibly be shot, and felt rather a beast at the humble way he always professed himself my faithful servant.

‘I can only imagine that he was too taken up with his own concerns to pay much attention to mine, for he never questioned me about Mollie Seymour even after our engagement had been publicly announced. I had come to an arrangement with Charles whereby he allowed me to transfer my horses to his stable and hunt from there for the rest of the season, and their arrival brought out the only objectionable trait in *Bismark's* otherwise admirable character. He was jealous of my old horse. When I rode the little mare he was only too eager to praise her performance—though with a certain kindly reserve verging on patronage, as if to suggest that the fair sex, however their efforts might delight us, could never be taken quite seriously when two or three of the lords of creation were gathered together. But if ever I attempted to describe to him a good hunt I had had on the old horse, he would fall silent altogether, or else assume an appreciative air the falseness of which was betrayed by the little barbed shafts of satire which accompanied it. His jealousy was only too apparent; it impressed itself upon me so strongly that it blinded me to a more obvious danger arising from his almost feudal attitude towards the whole of the female creation.

‘At the conclusion of the hunting season, we (that is to say my horses and myself) left the Kennels. Mollie and I were married early in the summer and took a house of our own. It happened



not unnaturally that she wished to ride all my horses, and as she was a first-class horsewoman there was really no reason why she should not. The only stipulation I made was that she should not take *Bismark* off the roads (did I mention that Charles gave him to me as a wedding present?) and to this, knowing his way with those who ventured with him upon grassland, she readily agreed.

'But familiarity, they say, breeds contempt. That is the only explanation I can find of Mollie's breaking her promise to me—that and the excitement of seeing hounds suddenly and unexpectedly when she had only gone out for a ride. *Bismark* must also have given way to the thrill of the moment . . . and then suddenly realised that he was sacrificing his reputation to a woman—he who was a militant anti-feminist!

'Perhaps she tried to dragoon him and so nearly succeeded that he lost his temper. Perhaps sudden excitement robbed him of his reason—either that, or the joy of carrying a lightweight across country at his own pace. Anyhow, it happened. She struck her stooping back against the low branch of a tree. But her accident was not like Charles's—*Bismark* galloped her under it. . . .'

My companion became so agitated at this stage in his narrative that I begged him to compose himself, and even urged him that if it was so painful to him he had better excuse himself from completing it for my benefit. However, he waved aside my protest, and, biting back his emotion, continued in a low voice:

'Mollie was hurt—badly hurt. It will therefore seem to you rather extraordinary that I should have gone out hunting the following day. But the name of the place where they were meeting had stayed in my head, and a nasty little thought connected with it.

'Ours is a fly country, but just one corner of it is fenced with stone walls, and to a bold rider who does not know the country these constitute a source of danger; for in several places the ground abutting them has been quarried and a perfectly safe-looking jump may conceal a twenty-foot drop. A stranger must look before he leaps—and *Bismark* was a stranger.

'It was a low, rotten thought of mine, but anger had temporarily blinded me. I admitted that I was betraying a friend, but condoned that betrayal by telling myself that he had already betrayed me and that he deserved any punishment I could inflict upon him. To be honest, I think that I had lately grown a little afraid of

him, and that there was at the back of my mind the idea that what would kill an ordinary horse would do little more than hurt him; I even had a superstitious fear that his combined strength and cunning might prove invulnerable. I was influenced in my decision by the proximity of the meet. You see, I could not shoot him—for had he been an ordinary horse his crime might well have been an accident—and besides, I wanted him to know, if only for an instant, that my revenge was deliberate.

‘Once out in the open, the opportunity I was seeking soon presented itself. In front of the whole field, who were surprised to see me there at all, I faced him at a wall which I knew stood on the lip of a quarry.

‘Don’t think too hardly of me: remember that I shared the risk—no, the certainty of injury—although I hoped by sitting well back to escape with a few bruises. The drop I had chosen was not enormous, and cases have been known of horses being jumped over quite high cliffs and killed—in the dark or fog—and their riders remaining unhurt in the saddle. At least I had to nerve myself to do it—although I was so frightened by my wife’s condition that such injuries as I might sustain in the fall paled into insignificance.

‘Despite the warning cries of those who saw the danger at which I was galloping (and which, if *Bismark* heard at all, he ignored, placing perfect trust in me) I held my course, straight for that portion of the wall which I knew stood just over the quarry. It was a high wall, so that he could not see over it till he was almost in the air—and a horse is notoriously blind.

‘I saw the glimmer of grey stone below me. I remember rushing through the air, and my struggle to sit well back. I even remember landing—in a sort of dull blur that faded out into nothing.

‘The next thing that I remember was finding myself in bed in the dark, strapped up so that I couldn’t move my right arm and with a splitting headache. I asked the usual questions: “Where was I?” and “What had happened?” and was given the usual stupid answers—“In bed” and “That I mustn’t worry”; which, of course, only made me worry all the more. I asked what had happened to *Bismark*, and a voice told me that he had been killed. I was very grieved about this. At the first opportunity I got the doctor to see me alone and explained to him that *Bismark*, besides being a first-class performer and a jolly good sort, was the only horse able to talk that I had ever heard of, and that I thought

some sort of monument ought to be erected to his memory. The doctor was very reasonable about it; he said that certainly he thought something ought to be done, and that he would discuss the matter with a few friends. But although I spoke about it several times, it never seemed to get any further than that; and it finally dawned on me that he thought I was off my rocker.

'After that I shut up, and confided only in a very few people. You, sir, are only the third I have told, but as you seemed to have a genuine interest in horses I thought you would not mind my boring you with the story; particularly as there do come times when I am tempted to suppose, as the doctor and one or two others have suggested, that I have imagined the whole thing; and then just telling the story to someone does keep it fresh in my memory and recall to me any little details I may have begun to lose . . .' He trailed off rather lamely.

We were approaching Reading, and this, by his glances out of the window and movements for his cap and gloves, I understood to be his destination; but there was time to ask him just one question. It seemed to me curious that in ending his story he had told me nothing about his wife's condition and recovery. I did not think she could have died, or he would have said so straight out.

I could not help wondering a little at the guilty start with which he greeted my question, and asking myself if their relations had been as cordial as he had given me to understand. But his explanation reproached me for doubting him, and reawakened my sympathy.

'I had meant to leave that out,' he said, 'for after all, the story I set out to tell you was the story of a horse; I have only dragged in my own wretched little affairs in so far as they have been necessary to explain my inhuman treatment of one whom I had learnt to regard as a friend. However, I will tell you the rest.

'My wife recovered more quickly than the doctors had expected; and my great anxiety, which had caused me to act so foolishly and wrongly, was at an end. But no sooner was I rid of it than I was overtaken by a calamity infinitely more bitter; for she announced her intention of leaving me, and firmly stuck to it. She knew that I was well acquainted with the country over which we rode, and refused to believe that mine had been a genuine accident. Not only, she said, was I devoid of all feeling for animals—and that she might have forgiven, although it argued a callousness in my nature which she had never suspected—but I had

lamentably failed to consider her, in that I had exposed her to a shock which might have killed her, in that critical condition.

‘When I told her the whole of *Bismark*’s story she laughed scornfully. If she had had any doubts, she said then, about leaving me, they were dispelled by the buffoonery which had prompted me to insult her, whom I had already injured so deeply.’

We drew into Reading Station, and his last words were drowned in the clamour of our arrival. He shrugged his shoulders and waved good-bye to me. He walked quickly down the middle of the restaurant car. The last I saw of him was his back as he passed through the groups of travellers towards the station exit, and it was then for the first time that his figure struck me as being vaguely familiar. It may have been the way he walked.

I returned slowly to my compartment, where I found Juddy still deep in the newspaper—though I suspect that his interest in the news had only been reawakened when he heard me coming down the corridor.

It was not till we were leaving Paddington that I discovered the loss of my note-case. I did not tell Juddy; I even did my best to appreciate his conversation, which rarely rose above the commonplace and frequently descended to the gutter. My forbearance will be better appreciated when I explain that my note-case had contained the whole of my winnings at Wincanton, the best part of seventy pounds.

The bitter train of thought started by the recollection that I had never before come away a winner by even half this amount led me to the discovery of where I had seen those stooping shoulders before, and that curiously important walk. I was back at that golden moment when I stood among a litter of torn betting tickets and had my hand filled with rather dirty notes. I had thanked the bookie, who acknowledged my courtesy somewhat gruffly; and I had noticed, as I turned away, the presence of a knowledgeable-looking man in a brown bowler, who ostentatiously tore up his ticket when my eye fastened on him.

It is not always the knowledgeable-looking ones who get away with the loot, and I had felt rather pleased with myself. Pride, they say, comes before a fall. The only thing left for me to do is to write this story down as a warning to others not to converse with strangers in the train, and a possible means of getting back part of my seventy pounds.

## RECOLLECTIONS OF A GOVERNMENT WHIP.

BY SIR GEORGE LEVESON GOWER, K.B.E.

AT WESTMINSTER.

My first appointment as Whip in 1886 carried with it the post of Junior Lord of the Treasury. This is one of the curious survivals whereby, on the ground of expediency, a man is paid for performing certain very strenuous work by being given something else that is practically a sinecure. The Treasury Commissioners consist of the First Lord (the Prime Minister), the Chancellor of the Exchequer and four Junior Lords. The two first have, of course, their own very arduous and responsible duties; in the case of the Junior Lords their duties as 'Commissioners' are confined to affixing, at long intervals, a formal signature to some document for which they have no responsibility. The real work of the Treasury is carried on by the Secretary and his numerous permanent subordinates. Every other Department knows, when it receives a communication that 'My Lords regret that they cannot comply with your suggestion, etc.,' that the Treasury Commissioners have been no more consulted than the King of Italy or the Astronomer-Royal, and so this all-powerful and autocratic body controls, itself unseen, the activities of every other branch of the Executive. At the same time the Junior Lords are expected to discharge certain miscellaneous unpaid jobs in addition to their work as Whips. In my case, in 1886 I represented the Office of Public Works in the House of Commons, the First Commissioner, Earl Morley (not to be confused with the better-known John Morley), being a Peer, and being succeeded, when he retired on his disagreement with the policy of Home Rule, by the Earl of Elgin. This involved my answering any questions connected with the Office of Works which might be put in the Commons, and also having to defend the Estimates for that Department. This last proved a particularly ticklish job, as since it was my first Session, I had never even heard Estimates debated. You could be shot at without notice on any subject, from the maintenance of the royal cream-coloured horses, to the plans of a post office at Inverness, or to the suitability of

barracks erected at Hong-Kong. It is true that one had the help of a volume of mysterious and highly confidential 'Blue Notes,' giving curious information on the most unexpected topics, which one was solemnly charged not to mislay, but other means of defence were necessary. My own method was to read the Debates on the Works Estimates for the previous ten years, as certain subjects tended to recur as hardy annuals, and secondly to 'read, mark, learn and inwardly digest' the Estimates of, the current year in the spirit of a captious critic, noting whatever points might seem questionable and finding out the answer (if there were one).

The debate on Estimates took eight hours and included many an anxious moment. I managed to get everything through except one point; namely, the charge for the London Parks. The Parliament was a new one, elected on an enlarged franchise and many recently elected Members were naturally anxious to show their zeal on their constituents' behalf. Some of the country M.P.'s objected to the cost of the London Parks being paid by the taxpayer at large, whilst their own constituents had to pay for their own Parks, as well as for those in London. I tried to point out that London was the capital, not only of the Kingdom but of the Empire, and that Government thus provided wonderful scenes of beauty and amenity, not only for country visitors to London but also for Colonials. The objectors beat us on a Division, and I remember Herbert Gladstone saying jokingly to me, 'You're a nice fellow, to let the Government down the very first time you have a chance!' But as the majority in this question were mostly supporters of the Government, they were satisfied with their demonstration and the item was restored at the Report stage; a convenient method of rectifying any little mishaps.

My first speech was on a Bill for apportioning between various local bodies the cost of the newly reconstructed Hyde Park Corner. This was complicated by the fact that three parishes were involved, which gave me the opportunity of making a mild joke to the effect that whilst everybody agreed that the cost should be met, everybody also agreed that someone else should meet it. It is wonderful how easily a small joke goes down in the House; like the British Army, it goes a long way. My natural nervousness was diminished by the fact that I had to be called upon at a fixed time, instead of having to jump up and down to catch the Speaker's eye, and that the House knew that I was in charge of the Bill and was not taking up their time for my own gratification. I got the



Second Reading, and when the Bill was then remitted to a Committee upstairs, I had only one difficulty. The local bodies, after some wrangling, agreed to their share of expenses, the only remaining obstacle being the question as to who should bear the cost of maintaining the islands between the roads. Although I had no authority to do so, and no opportunity to consult the First Commissioner, I reflected that whilst the demand was fair, since the land belonged to the Crown, the cost would not be large, so took the bull by the horns and said that the Office of Works would be responsible for that expenditure. I was afterwards relieved to find that my undertaking was not repudiated.

## II.

A snap division is one of the chief dangers to be guarded against. One advantage in this respect is enjoyed by the Conservatives, which seems to me unfair. The St. Stephen's Club, a Tory institution, lies just across the street in front of Palace Yard. A division bell rings in this Club, in the same way that bells announce a division in the precincts of the House, and a subway connects the Club with the House of Commons. When Conservatives are in Opposition, if they want to catch Government napping, they muster here in force, as a wag put it, 'Hiding them, like the prophets, by fifties in a cave,' and appear suddenly for a preconcerted Division. I am surprised that any First Commissioner of Works should have granted these facilities, which could only have been conceded through gross partiality or culpable negligence. I strongly urged the Commissioner either to block up the subway or at least to disconnect the Division bell. As he declined to act, in my opinion rather pusillanimously, I posted a Messenger outside the Club to keep us informed of the number of M.P.'s there, and thus to guard, as far as possible, against a surprise. This excited angry remonstrance from Conservatives to which I paid no attention whatsoever.

Indeed, to vary an old saying, eternal vigilance is the price of office, especially with a narrow majority. This was notably the case in the Administration which lasted from 1892 to 1895, which at the beginning had a majority of 42, including the Irish Nationalists, and sank towards the end to 18.

In 1894 Lord Rosebery, then Premier, revived for the last time the ancient and honourable institution of a Government Fish Dinner at Greenwich. We went by steamer and it was great fun. I was called upon for a speech which was not to be longer than

five minutes, and pointed out that whilst Ministers were much pleased with themselves and attributed their survival to their legislative, oratorical and administrative abilities, the real reason for their survival was the unflagging vigilance of the humble, underpaid and overworked Whips. Incidentally I mentioned that I had that day received a £10 cheque from Colonel Stacey, of the Guards, in payment of a bet made in 1890 that if we came into Office we should not be able to maintain ourselves for a couple of years.

Mr. Gladstone, whilst the soul of courtesy, was apt to neglect opportunities of casual intercourse with his followers. Always working at high pressure himself, he thought that his supporters shared his indifference to social trivialities, and were, like himself, exclusively animated by a high sense of duty. During divisions I more than once ventured to interrupt him when he was writing for dear life in the Division Lobby by a request that he would say something to a supporter whom I knew such attention would gratify. He generally refused, looking up in a worried way and saying, 'Can't you see how busy I am?'

Very different in this respect was Disraeli. The story runs that during Divisions he generally had a Whip standing beside him, and that some such conversation as this would take place.

D. 'Who is that red-faced man by the writing-table?'

Whip. 'That is Mr. Johnson, who won East Slumpshire by 850. The Radical majority had been about 500.'

D. 'Pray ask him to come and speak to me.'

D. (to the much-gratified Mr. Johnson). 'My dear Mr. Johnson, I am so glad of this opportunity, which the cares of State have hitherto denied me, of warmly congratulating you upon your remarkable victory in East Slumpshire, where, if my memory serves me, you converted a hostile majority of some 500 into one of over 800.' (To the Whip.) 'Was that not so?' 'I can assure you, Mr. Johnson, I am most grateful for your invaluable support.'

Mr. Johnson is highly gratified by the belief that he and East Slumpshire have been so much in the Prime Minister's mind since the General Election, and retires with visions of a knighthood in the near future.

In 1892, on the formation of the Government, in addition to being Comptroller of the Household I was appointed Second Estates Commissioner to the Ecclesiastical Commission, this being one of the unpaid posts which Whips had to undertake. The Commission, consisting of five Members, met for some three hours

once a week in a ramshackle building in Whitehall Place, on the site of the present magnificent Ministry of Agriculture ; there was also a shadowy and very numerous Committee which, as far as I recollect, never met. The Secretary, Mr. A. de Bock Porter, a man of remarkable tact and ability, was, strangely enough, a Congregationalist, having been perhaps selected as being impartial between the different shades of Church doctrine. The Commission managed the landed property of a number of the Sees, and administered Queen Anne's Bounty, a fund for the repairing or rebuilding of parsonages. Bishop Temple, then Bishop of London, one of the Commissioners, wrote his correspondence during the meetings without missing anything that was going on. He once shocked our rather conventional chairman, Lord Stanhope, by an unexpected outburst whilst some impudent and untenable claim of an incumbent was being discussed. 'There is nothing to equal the mendicity of a certain class of clergymen but their mendacity !' His observations, made with a slight West Country accent, were always to the point.

The Commissioners owned property in London. A tenant wished to renew her lease, but the Secretary suggested that this might not be desirable as the lady's character was not above suspicion. 'Oh, then we must refuse it,' said the Chairman. It was pointed out that this might be awkward, as without evidence we could hardly assert that she was an undesirable tenant, and that if we refused upon that ground, we might lay ourselves open to an action at law. I then, in my most innocent manner, offered to procure evidence as to the lady's character, or want of it, as I was the youngest Commissioner, and the only bachelor among them, but added, as these negotiations were facilitated by cash, that a grant of £25 would make my investigations much easier. The Chairman was much scandalised, but was the only one who thought that my proposal was meant seriously.

### III.

The first, and I hope the last, occasion upon which blows were exchanged within the House, was in 1893, when the second Home Rule Bill was being debated in Committee.

Party feeling had reached boiling-point, supporters of Government being exasperated by what they regarded as the unreasonable obstruction of the Opposition and their opponents by the application of the Closure, which had been introduced as a remedy. Mr.

Mellor, Chairman of the Committee, was in the Chair. He was conscientious and painstaking, and not devoid of ability ; however, he not only lacked the prestige of the Speaker's position, but was handicapped by a weak voice and a certain appearance of hesitancy in giving his decisions, which greatly contrasted with Speaker Peel's commanding presence, stately address, resonant tones and prompt and conclusive rulings.

On a Division being called for the application of the Closure, amid cries of 'Gag,' when the Committee had been wrought up to a dangerous pitch of excitement, there was some delay in clearing the House, that is, the Members did not promptly pass from the Chamber into the Division Lobbies. This difficulty was chiefly due to the crowd. A rule forbids Members from standing on the floor of the House and some of the Opposition shouted at supporters of the Government for disregarding this rule. They particularly directed their exhortations to Mr. Logan, who sat for one of the Leicestershire Divisions. He was a hunting man of powerful physique and of hot temper. He retorted to the cries of 'Order! Order!' and finally when they shouted 'Sit down, Logan!' accepted the invitation literally and plumped himself down on the Front Opposition bench, at that time empty, the Opposition leaders having passed into the Division Lobby. Thereupon Mr. Hayes Fisher, M.P., I think, for Fulham, who had been Private Secretary to Mr. Balfour during his Irish Secretaryship, and who was sitting on the bench behind the Front Opposition Bench, leant forward and tried to push Logan off. Logan called out, 'Take your hands off me!' and when Fisher did not desist, hit him in the face. Logan was then attacked by more than one assailant, whilst several Irish Members, who then sat below the gangway on the Opposition side, rushed to help him. I believe that the only tangible injury caused by this fracas was suffered by Colonel Gunter, a placid and rather corpulent Conservative Member, whom the Irish Members literally walked over in their dash to Logan's assistance. By this time the House was in a turmoil, paying no attention to the Chairman, whose voice was drowned in the din.

A curious incident occurred during this outburst. It is the custom of the Whips before a critical Division to pass through the Lobby which will shortly receive their opponents in order to make sure that none of their own men are there, and so, through carelessness, omit to leave before the doors are locked, in which case they would have to record their vote with the Opposition. After this

inspection the Whips station themselves at the three entrances to the Opposition Lobby to prevent any of their men entering it by mistake. I was going up to one of these swing doors whilst the hurly-burly below was in full swing. A Colonel, who sat for a West Midland constituency and was the son-in-law of a very charming Peeress (to whom, in his later days, Disraeli was much attached) called out to me, 'What are you doing here?' He was slightly lame from an accident in the hunting field, and carried a thick oak stick, which he raised in a threatening manner. If a friend sitting next to him had not caught his arm, I believe that he would have given me a crack on the head before I could have explained the situation. But what was really the most curious part of the incident was that a moment later, whilst confusion was still raging below, he turned to me in the most friendly manner, and said, 'Is it not disgraceful to see such a thing in the House of Commons?' 'Yes,' I answered drily, 'and it is lucky that the row has not spread to other parts of the House.' He cordially agreed, and I really believe that he did not see my allusion and had entirely forgotten his gesture a moment before, thus illustrating the truth of the Latin poet who describes anger as 'a short madness.'

The whole episode was ended by the entrance of Speaker Peel, who had been sent for and who at once restored order by a few grave words of admonition. We all felt like a class of schoolboys who have run riot when in charge of an incompetent usher, and are reduced to embarrassed silence by the appearance of the Head Master. One almost expected to hear him say: 'Now, boys, what is the meaning of all this?'

#### IV.

##### AT COURT.

When, on the formation of the Government in 1892, I resumed my duties as Whip, I did so as Comptroller of the Queen's Household. This entailed more work than my previous post as Junior Lord, as it involved attendance at all Court functions in addition to the usual duties of a Whip. The salary, however, was £100 less, and one had to buy a Civil Service uniform of the 2nd class, costing £150. An irate M.P. once threatened to move a reduction of my salary on the Estimates. I pleased him by anxiously deprecating such a move, but, on his remaining obdurate, pleased him less by

pointing out that he could not do so as my salary was not borne on the Estimates but on the Queen's Civil List.

The Prince of Wales always represented Her Majesty at Court functions. I admired his quickness in recognising personal friends at Levées, where people making their bow passed him at the rate of sixteen a minute. He invariably shook hands with those whom he knew, and often exchanged a word. This practice ceased when he ascended the Throne, and the change was intimated by the simple contrivance of placing a broad rug before the place where he stood, so that a shake of the hand became physically impossible. He was alert to mark any solecism in dress. Sir Arthur Hardinge, afterwards Ambassador at Madrid, a very able but extremely absent-minded man, once passed him at a Levée wearing one shoe and one buttoned boot. The Prince told him that he was the less excusable since, when a boy, he had been a Page at Court. His excuse, 'I am sorry, sir, but I am very short-sighted!' quite disarmed the Prince. The late Lord Salisbury once attended a Levée wearing his Diplomatic coat, whilst his trousers, which were somewhat of the same hue, belonged to the uniform of the Trinity House. His valet being on a holiday the footman had put out the wrong trousers. Lord Salisbury when remonstrated with made the characteristic answer: 'I am sorry, sir, I am afraid that I must have been thinking of less important matters.' This Trinity House uniform inevitably prompts a story which, if not new, is too good not to be revived. On one occasion, Joseph Chamberlain was wearing it and was asked by a foreign diplomat what it was. French was not one of his strong points, so he amazed his questioner by informing him in too literal a translation, '*Je suis le Frère Aîné de la Trinité*' . . . the Members of the Trinity House (which controls questions of pilotage and shipping), being known as 'Elder Brethren.'

Lord Carrington, afterwards Marquis of Lincolnshire, as Lord Chamberlain, had to announce those attending Levées, when they passed the Prince. As already mentioned, they passed so rapidly that he hardly had time to look at them, but read their names from their cards, which were handed to him as each person came abreast of the Prince. Viscount Coke, followed by about a dozen officers of the Norfolk Yeomanry, in brilliant uniform, was in consequence announced by Carrington as 'Colonel Vincent Coke,' pronouncing his name like the combustible instead of 'Cook,' which of course is the proper way. What made this mistake the



more laughable was that Carrington knew him quite well and also, of course, the correct pronunciation.

'Courts,' then called 'Drawing Rooms,' occasionally provided amusing incidents. Ambassadors stood next to the higher officers of the Household, whose place was on the left of the Prince of Wales. I thus found myself next to Countess Deym, wife of the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, who was the doyen or senior, of that body. She was an enormous fair woman, who must have been handsome in her youth, and she kept edging herself in front of me. The Prince told me that I was not to allow this, so at the next Drawing Room I asked her in French to move back a little; for all answer I got a supercilious glance over her huge shoulder. The Prince encouraged me by nods and winks, so when I added, 'C'est, Madame, par ordre de Son Altesse Royale que je vous fais cette demande,' she hastily complied.

One poor débutante was so terrified after making her curtsy, that instead of following her mother out of the room, she rushed between me and Countess Deym, and stood trembling in the corner of the room where there was no exit, disregarding her mother's desperate signals. With some difficulty I persuaded her to rejoin her mother; the Prince afterwards chaffed me for 'flirting with a pretty girl in the corner.'

Maria, Countess of Ailesbury, in reality the kindest of souls, had an alarming aspect. She was tall, gaunt, with a very deep voice, and a big red wig; and in general appearance rather like Queen Elizabeth in her later years. At Drawing Rooms minor Court officials stood in a row opposite the Prince and the other Royalties. They had to take up the ladies' long trains and pass them on to each other, the last one placing the train over the lady's arm after she had made her curtsy, and was about to retire. An elderly and rather infirm man was the last of the row, and unluckily put Lady Ailesbury's train on the wrong arm. Highly incensed, she called out to him, 'You stupid old man! You don't even know your own silly business!' The Prince was delighted, and told me afterwards what a pleasant relief such incidents gave to the tedium of these long ceremonies.

Queen Victoria broke her rule of abstaining from public functions when she opened the Imperial and Colonial Institute. Walking backward in front of her in the procession to the dais, I miscalculated the distance to the steps and snapped my slender white wand of office in two. Nobody seemed to observe it, and on the return

journey from the dais to the door I held the two pieces together at the place of fracture. I did not so much mind the two pieces being at a slightly different angle, as I realized that the people would be looking at the Queen and not at me, but I was slightly nervous lest one of the pieces should fall from my grasp, and so mar the dignity of the procession. But all ended well.

Gala nights at the Opera, when attended by the King, were always crowded. After one of these, Lord Carrington, then Lord Chamberlain, had unusual difficulty in clearing a way for the Royal party to their carriage. An enormous woman, the rotundities of whose figure were inartistically emphasised by a light dress with large chintz-like patterns, either misunderstood or disregarded his request to make room, so that he was forced to push her gently aside. The next day a formal complaint came from the Italian Ambassador, that his wife had been subjected to physical violence by the Lord Chamberlain—that, in fact, he had gone so far as to—kick her. ‘Kick her!’ cried Charlie Carrington indignantly, ‘I never kicked her, I only pushed her with my knee.’ It is not recorded how the Foreign Office conveyed this subtle distinction to the aggrieved Ambassador.

When the Ambassador was afterwards transferred to Constantinople, a colleague was asked whether he knew the reason for this change of post. The Count, who had a microscopic nose, was known to be very anxious to have a son. ‘*Mon cher,*’ said his colleague, ‘*c’est qu’il désire tellement avoir un nouveau né,*’ leaving the questioner in doubt as to whether ‘a new born son—“né,”’ or ‘a new nose—“nez,”’ were intended.

## THE SACK!

BY W. F. WATSON.

THE word 'sack' appears, with very little variation, in all European languages, and is said to be borrowed from the Hebrew *sag*, properly a coarse stuff made of hair, hence a bag made of that material. Most etymologists attribute the widespread occurrence of the word to the story of Joseph and his brethren in Genesis xlv. In all probability the Hebrew word is itself Egyptian, as is evidenced by the Coptic *sok*.

'Sack' is also used as a unit of dry measure, which has varied at different times and places and for different commodities. It is the usual British measure for coals, potatoes, apples, etc., and is equivalent to three bushels. The word also means pillage and plunder, and it still remains to distinguish the name of a Spanish wine. Indeed, it became a common name for all the stronger wines of the South.

But how did the word come to be used in connection with discharging a person from employment? To 'give the sack' or to 'get the sack' appear to be old French proverbial expressions. Randle Cotgrave, the English lexicographer of the seventeenth century, gives *On luy a donné sa sac et ses quilles*, 'he hath his passport given him, he is turned out to grazing, said of a servant whom his master hath put away.'

That may satisfactorily explain how the word came to be used in that way, but it does not tell us the connection between a 'large bag made of a coarse material' and turning a person out of employment. It is permissible to assume that just as the word came to be used to denote pillage and plunder because the sack is the most obvious receptacle for booty, so was it adopted first as a slang word when 'said of a servant whom his master hath put away,' because the servant usually had some sort of a bag or sack in which he kept his implements of labour or his belongings; or produce perhaps, since, in medieval times, servants were very often paid in kind.

The average worker may be quite ignorant as to how the word 'sack' first became used for 'firing' a man, but he is perfectly aware

that to get the sack is a very severe penalty, and a serious matter. It means the dislocation of a man's life. Instead of going to work as he has been accustomed to—maybe for years—he now has to embark on the weary quest for work, and it is possible that he may have to face the hazards and demoralisation attendant upon prolonged unemployment. He may secure a job many miles away which will necessitate the removal of his home to a distant district, and the consequent interruption of his children's education; and it may mean many weeks of poverty and semi-starvation. Let us take a peep inside a factory when discharges are imminent.

For some time past it has been apparent that work was falling off at Messrs. Smith's, and week by week dismissals have been anticipated. By some means or other the news leaks out on Thursday (the day prior to pay day) that a number are to be sacked next day, and the whole place is immediately shrouded in gloom; each man is wondering whether he will be one of the unfortunates.

'I expect I shall cop it!' says Tom to Jack. 'The old man doesn't like me! . . .'

'I don't know,' replies Jack consolingly. 'Old Brookes is not too bad, when you come to know him. As like as not I shall be one of 'em!'

Of course, Jack doesn't mean it. He has been with the firm so many years that he thinks he has got a job for life, and he feels quite safe, although it doesn't do to let Tom know that.

'I don't give a hang if I do get the sack!' says Harry rather flamboyantly. 'Expect I shall get another job somewhere.' Which is largely bravado—he fears the sack as much as anyone.

Jim remains silent, an anxious look on his face—his brow puckered—he can ill afford to be out of work.

Alf and Bert meet at the emery wheel. Bert steps aside.

'Go on, Alf. You go first.'

'That's all right, Bert. You'd better have a grind first. Mine'll take some time.'

'Right-o! I won't be a tick. My word, this wheel wants truing up a bit!'

'It does so. But there, I don't suppose we'll want it after to-morrow!' laughs Alf.

'Oh, yes. I'd almost forgotten. There's going to be a "slaughter" to-morrow. Of course, *we'll* get it, Alf!'

'Bet your life, Bert. We were the last two taken on. Vic was telling me yesterday to expect it! . . .'

'Yes. He told me also. Let's see . . . How long have I been here? . . . January to September . . . nine months. Not too bad. Managed to get myself a new suit—and I rigged out the wife and kiddies! . . .'

'I came a week after you, Alf. Didn't expect to be here so long. I don't mind being "out" . . . it's the missis! . . .'

'I was telling my old woman last night. She'd got her nose stuck in Wadgar Ellis's latest. Mystery of the Haunted Sausage or something . . . Ha! Ha! . . . "Don't be surprised if I get the sack," I said. "Won't be the first time, will it?" she said. "Expect we'll manage somehow, we've done it before . . . Landlord'll have to wait, that's all! . . ."

'Wish my old girl was like that, Alf. Do you know, she started howling as soon as I mentioned the sack. "Just as we were getting a bit straight . . . and pull ourselves round a bit," she moaned. "Oh, shut up," I says, "it's not a bit of use crying! . . ."

'Oh, well, Bert. It just shows you how different women are . . . mind you, you can't blame 'em when they get upset! . . .'

Next day the atmosphere is electric, but the men are for the most part very subdued. It is now known that eight are to go from that shop. True, some are whistling, and others crack jokes about it, but they are merely trying to hide their feelings. Each man looks anxiously round the shop wondering who the other seven might be, for everyone says, whether he means it or not, 'I suppose I shall be one of 'em.' If the foreman is a good sort he will divulge the names to his particular crony during the afternoon, and he will quickly broadcast them, but this seldom happens nowadays. One is usually kept in suspense until an hour before the hooter goes. As half-past four approaches all eyes are on the foreman's office, watching his every move.

'Here he comes!' we say to each other as he leaves his office with a serious expression on his face and a paper in his hand.

'Look! he's talking to old Fred Jones. I thought somehow he'd be amongst them!' And in all probability the foreman is only discussing a job with Jones.

'Hullo! He's coming right over here. I guessed as much—I knew I was for it! . . .'

But Jack is mistaken, and he heaves a sigh of relief when the foreman passes him and approaches Jim, who has been in a state bordering on panic all the afternoon. His face turns livid—his hands and knees begin to tremble! . . .

'I'm awfully sorry, Jim, old man!' Some foremen put a wealth of sympathy in the voice when performing this unpleasant task. 'But I've had instructions to put you off. There are eight to go . . . Things are very slack, you know, but,' he adds hopefully, 'they might brighten up before long . . . if so, I'll send for you.'

Poor Jim stutters something—the tears are very near his eyes—he is too full for words! . . . He is probably wondering how to break the news to his wife . . . she is in a very interesting condition! . . .

'Oh, well!' says Tom, still full of bravado, when he is told to pack up. 'It can't be helped, I suppose. It's not the first time I've had the "tin-tack," and I don't suppose it'll be the last.'

From one to the other the foreman passes, and then returns slowly to his office, very depressed—he hates the job of sacking people. The unlucky ones begin to clean and pack up their tools, amid the sympathy of those who are kept on, and, such is the big-heartedness of the average workman, the sacked men condole with each other.

'I'm sorry you've copped it, old man! It's a bit rough on you, with four kids to keep. . . . Oh, yes! I know I'm one of 'em, but it's not so bad for me . . . only got one youngster! . . . Besides, I'm expecting to get fixed up at Robinson's . . . foreman's a pal of mine, you know. If I hear of anything to suit you, I'll give you the wire.'

Knowing the circumstances, the greatest sympathy goes out to young Jim Williams.

'It's rotten for young Williams, isn't it? You know his missis is expecting? . . . Hope he soon clicks a job . . . I know what it is! . . .'

One by one they go to Jim, expressing sincere sympathy, hoping he will soon get work again, and recommending him to call here, there and everywhere, naming firms where he may possibly get work. Jim is overwhelmed—he can scarce keep back the tears. He dreads the next few weeks.

Next day the shop wears a mournful aspect; we miss old comrades, we think what a narrow escape we have had, and we wonder when *our* turn will come.

What a terrible tragedy the sack is for a man who, after having worked in a factory for many years, is summarily dismissed for slackness, bankruptcy or rationalisation! Such a man may be



forgiven for saying, 'I don't know, but it does seem unfair! The firm has had the best out of me for twenty years, and now I'm being slung out, just as one would discard an orange after all the juice has been sucked from it! . . .' Think how his normal life will be dislocated. He has become thoroughly accustomed to the shop, he is familiar with every machine, vice, bench—he knows exactly where all tools are kept. The shop, the machines, the tools have been part of his life for years. He has made chums of his shopmates. At the eating-house where for years he has made a practice of taking his meals, and the tavern where he usually took a convivial glass, he has made a circle of acquaintances, men from adjacent factories. All these happy associations must be broken asunder—he must fold his tent and depart into the wilderness of unemployment. In the next shop he will find new methods, tools and machines. He will find fresh faces round him in the shop with whom he will have to chum up if he wants to be happy, and he will have to rub shoulders with strangers in a new eating-house and tavern. He hates the thought of change—the wrench is great—his heart is heavy. As he slowly walks through the shop with his tools under his arm, he looks lovingly and longingly at the machines, and at everything that is so familiar to him, as though trying to fix in his memory a permanent picture of the place where he has spent so many years of his life. And a long sigh escapes him as he says good-bye to the gatekeeper and passes out of the factory into the infinite blue! . . .

Fear of unemployment is, of course, the predominant factor connected with the sack. We immediately visualise a future without the usual weekly pay envelope, and we dread the daily visits to the most depressing of all places—the Employment Exchange. But it is by no means the only factor. One's position may be such that two or three weeks out of work will not matter very much; indeed, we may welcome the chance of a change—we may even expect the sack and not be a bit surprised when we get it; but despite all that, even though we take it quite philosophically, we cannot escape the feeling that we are being unfairly dealt with. We are perfectly aware that the employer cannot afford to pay wages unless there is work to be done, but it is not our fault, we reason, that business is slack! And there is something to be said for the argument. After all, slackness is usually due to the failure of the management, an unavoidable failure perhaps, but it must nevertheless be regarded as a failure to secure the first essential

of maximum efficiency, that of continuity of running. And one is apt to think one has been specially selected.

'Why did they pick on me, I wonder!' we soliloquise. 'I'm sure I'm a better workman than Fred Jackson! . . . And there's Arthur MacIntyre . . . he hasn't been here so long as I have . . . I think he should have been fired before me! . . .'

Imagine the great responsibility that rests on the shoulders of the man who has the power to sack another; think of the untold misery that may ensue from the capricious tyranny of one who misuses such power! In most factories, particularly in the engineering industry, the whole industrial life of the workman is in the hands of his foreman. Years ago, the foreman chose what men he required from among the applicants at the gate, fixed the wage he was to receive—sometimes the piecework prices as well—and, as a rule, the foreman had the unrestricted right to sack men at will. In the big factories to-day, men are engaged through the firm's own labour office, and drafted to the respective departments, and dismissals are invariably arranged through the main office. But although the foreman may not have the right—as in former days—to sack employees directly, no management with any regard to efficiency, would dream of making any discharges without first consulting the departmental foremen. The management decides the number to go—the foreman decides the personnel. Moreover, it is the foreman who reports instances of incompetency and misconduct to the management, and it is so easy for a foreman to frame a bad report about one against whom he may have a 'complex.' In the smaller shops, and there are literally thousands of them, the absolute power of the sack is exercised by the foreman or manager.

Obviously, only men with exceptional qualities should be allowed to possess such power and responsibility, and yet they are very often only promoted workmen with no marked superiority in education, outlook, or sympathy with the men under their charge; they have been selected generally for their driving power and energy. It is therefore not difficult to believe that the power to sack is often abused, and a tyranny established both in matters of detail and principle, a tyranny which the management, with the best intentions in the world, has very little power to soften or control.

A workman may be told by the foreman at an hour's notice—sometimes even less—that his services are no longer required. If it is obviously a case of slackness of work, the man accepts his dismissal, apparently, at any rate, with sang-froid and good grace;

but if it be the result of a 'few words' with the man in charge over some trivial affair, then the man feels that it is a wanton act of spite or revenge and he quite naturally resents it. But what can he do? He has no court of appeal against what he considers to be unwarrantable discharge. It is practically impossible to get past the foreman to the manager or employer, but supposing he does march boldly into the office and lodge his complaint, he is hardly likely to get any satisfaction in that direction. Whatever sympathy the management may have with the dismissed man—they may conceivably think his cause just, and that he has been harshly treated—they are compelled to back up their agent. To support the workman against the decision of the foreman would lead to complications. The foreman would no doubt regard it as an affront to his authority. 'I am in charge of this shop,' he might reasonably argue. 'And if I say a man is to be sacked, then he must go or I shall resign.'

Then there is the question of discipline. If the management insisted upon the man's reinstatement, it would be an admission to the whole shop that the foreman was wrong, and his prestige would be permanently lowered. Feeling aggrieved (assuming that he did not resign) he would most likely lessen his efforts to promote the interests of the business. Friction in the shop would ensue, discipline would be impaired, efficiency reduced and production lessened. The knowledge that his action will be upheld is an inducement for a vindictive foreman to exercise the power to sack in order to satisfy a personal whim.

Similarly, if work falls off and the foreman is requested to select a number of men for dismissal, it is presumed by the employer that he will choose only the least efficient, or those who were the last to be taken on. In such circumstances foremen undoubtedly try to exercise their choice without fear or favour, but they would be little short of supermen if their judgment was not influenced—subconsciously if you will—by personal likes and dislikes.

It must not be thought that I am bringing an indictment against all foremen and managers, nor that I am blind to the numerous faults of the workmen. During many years' experience I have met foremen who simply loathed sacking men, and I have worked for employers who kept men on for weeks doing nothing, rather than sack them. Indeed, however bad a foreman or manager may be, few like the actual job of telling a man to pack up. I have worked beside men who simply 'asked' for the sack, and then

moaned about being 'victimised' when it was handed out to them! Should an employee continually lose time, or be insolent to his superiors; if he is slow and unsuited for the work; if he be a perpetual grumbler without cause, or an agitator whose presence in the shop has a demoralising effect on the rest of the men, then in the interests of efficiency and discipline, the management must dismiss him. On the other hand, I have seen men sacked without rhyme or reason or justice; I have myself been so treated on more than one occasion.

My first recollection of getting the sack was for fighting. I was only a lad at the time, and in an altercation with another lad in the shop, I gave him an unlucky blow which made his nose bleed. Goodness knows who was in the wrong—I guess it was fifty-fifty—but the foreman said he did not want anyone working for him who punched another lad on the nose, and I had to go. Whilst enjoying a brief honeymoon, the firm I was working for closed its doors through lack of finance, and I was sacked upon my return. On another occasion I lost my job because the firm lost a big Russian contract on the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War.

I remember a whole bunch of us getting fired one Friday because the firm had run short of cash, only a few being kept at work. We adjourned to an adjacent tavern to turn down an empty glass together before parting. Of course we spent more money than we should have done—I'm afraid we are like that, sometimes—and there is little doubt that some of us arrived home rather late, and in a 'pleasant jingle' state, but we were all sent for the following Wednesday. The firm had found some more 'pigeons'! This used to happen fairly frequently in those days!

I was once discharged for insisting on having six shillings and eightpence bonus I had earned on a job. The head foreman admitted that I was entitled to the money, and if I persisted in my demand, I should have it, but I would also get the sack. I received both—and I had been with the firm for three years and a half. Some time afterwards, I secured employment in the same building, but for another company. The morning I started, this foreman, in walking round the shop, spotted me at the lathe . . . I got the sack at dinner-time. That was the shortest job I ever had; it lasted exactly four hours and a half! I'm not sure, but I think I am the only man who can claim to have been dismissed before starting on a job, if such a thing is possible. It happened this way. Searching around for a job one morning, I called at a

big firm of printing-machine manufacturers, where I learned fitters were required. I saw the foreman, told him the tale, and was given a docket authorising me to start the following morning. At five o'clock in the evening, I received a telegram cancelling the engagement, and informing me that a letter would follow. Next morning's post brought me the letter, which explained that some mistake had been made, and that they had no suitable work to offer me. I am keeping the docket, telegram and letter as mementoes!

It was not very long ago since I received the sack through the post whilst in bed with a bad attack of the influenza, some flimsy excuse being given in the letter. As soon as I was able, I interviewed the managing director, but the only satisfaction I got from him was, 'I'm very sorry, Watson! Had I been consulted you would not have been discharged, and I would gladly have you back again, but . . . well, I can't go over the head of my works' manager! . . .' One could fill pages with similar instances. The only explanation possible is that the foreman took a dislike to me and was annoyed at my absence.

Here is a remarkable case which came to my notice some time ago. A highly skilled mechanic so improved the mechanism of a machine he was operating that it could be operated by an unskilled man, and he was discharged the following week-end. I once saw two chaps sent home at ten o'clock one Monday morning, simply because, through departmental mismanagement, the flow of work was temporarily held up!

A man is getting on with his work in the way experience has taught him to be the most expeditious, and he is happily whistling the while. His work is right up to the standard in respect to both quantity and quality. Along comes the manager who, maybe, has had little practical experience. Noticing that the job is being machined in a different way from that usually employed, he criticises not the work but the method. The workman at once politely points out that he knows his job, and that he is turning out the work both speedily and accurately. The manager retorts that the job has never been done that way before, and that so long as he is manager, he is going to have the work done *his* way. The man replies, perhaps testily, that he prefers his *own* way of working, and if the work is all right, what does it matter anyway! Tempers get frayed, high words follow, and the man is peremptorily dismissed. That has happened to me, and I have seen it happen to scores of others.

George is a couple of minutes late one morning, or maybe he has been seen chatting to a shopmate. Perhaps he is singing or whistling at work, or has made a slight mistake in a job. The foreman, probably harassed about something—maybe the boss has been 'ragging' him—reproves George rather sharply, which George resents with an equally sharp retort. A word-slinging match ensues, both lose their temper, and either George angrily throws up his job, or is reported and subsequently sacked by the angry foreman. Now the odds are that George can ill afford to lose his job and the foreman does not particularly want to lose a good man, but neither of them likes 'eating humble pie.'

It would be interesting to know how many persons at present engaged in the quest for work are unnecessarily unemployed. How many are the victims of a tyrannical foreman, or the caprice of a petulant manager? How many have lost a good job through having a 'few words' with someone in authority? If reliable figures were obtainable it would probably be found that quite a considerable number were sacked for some trifling reason, and had there been some kind of court of appeal, they would still be in employment. Ah, yes, it may be contended, but others will take their places and the unemployment figures are not thus affected. Not always. In many instances the vacancies are not filled, and I venture to say that wrongful and avoidable dismissals account for a fair percentage of the present unemployed figures.

Abuse of the right to sack undoubtedly impairs efficiency and discipline. If, as so often happens, the man wrongfully sacked is an important unit in the establishment and is not easy to replace, the work is disorganised and production retarded. It is always uneconomical to keep changing the staff. Moreover, a foreman or manager who has a reputation for discharging men on the least pretext, cannot expect to attract the best men, neither can he expect to get one hundred per cent. efficiency from those who work for him.

The problem of the right to sack is a very difficult one to overcome. It appears to be mainly a psychological question, involving the inevitable clash of opposing wills. But, even though it cannot be absolutely solved, surely its evils can be minimised!

No man should be appointed foreman or manager unless psychologically suited for the post. The successful administrator is he who knows how to discharge his duties with proper strictness, and yet win the respect and liking of his men. He must be fair



and impartial, courteous and kind, and he should be ready at all times to listen patiently, without loss of prestige and dignity, to the workman's side of the question. After all, there is no better way of securing the confidence and respect of a man than by showing him confidence and respect.

The power of dismissal should never be exercised by anyone in less authority than one of the principals of the firm or by the general manager himself. No man should be dismissed for any personal reason, except after an enquiry, and for a definite cause, and he should be allowed ample opportunity to explain and defend himself. In no instance should a foreman or under-manager possess the right to sack. They must, of course, have the right to report and suspend a man if deemed necessary, such suspension to be confirmed or not after formal enquiry, by the general manager or principal to whom this very important and difficult task has been assigned.

Even when workmen have to be discharged for slackness of work, the matter should not be treated lightly. At least a clear week's notice (or a week's wage in lieu thereof) should be given to the man about to be sacked, and efforts made to find him work in another department.

I would not be so foolish as to suggest that the unemployment problem can be solved by the appointment of perfect foremen and managers, but I do say (and I am guided by thirty years' workshop experience) that if the right to sack and the power to exercise it were under proper control, as has been proposed, there would be far less unnecessary and wrongful dismissals, the unemployment figures would be appreciably lowered, and there would be less friction and greater efficiency in industry.

### THE FETISH RING.

THE Residency was a mud house of four rooms and stood on a rise in the ground a quarter of a mile distant from the River Volta. Two white men lived there, a Resident and the Officer Commanding. Thirty Hausa soldiers, an interpreter, a few carriers and servants, made up their establishment.

Built upon the banks of the river lay a small town of some thousand inhabitants. There was the usual long street with narrow alleys running out on both sides and a market-place in the centre. There was the Palaver tree, in this case a group of coco-nut palms, and the council logs. Behind, and to the right and left of the town, lay well-cultivated farms and plantations, their crops almost ready for gathering. On the opposite side of the river as far as the eye could see, stretched a flat green plain covered with low bushes. Here game abounded.

Now the Gold Coast negro is not versatile. A farmer farms, a hunter hunts, a miner mines, and a fisherman fishes. Consequently the inhabitants being farmers no one had fished, and illogically and erroneously the Resident and his friend had decided there were no fish. But with the approach of the dry season natives arrived with nets and traps, and a sudden supply of fresh fish appeared.

Then the Officer, a keen fisherman, bestirred himself. He produced a ten-foot cane trout-rod—the middle joint damaged through being used as a whip by the house boy—an ancient line, a much-worn cast and three mouldy flies. Next he unearthed an old-fashioned twenty-foot bamboo mahseer rod and a large wood and brass reel with a hundred and fifty yards of salmon line. This, with the addition of an enormous mother-of-pearl spoon, completed an equipment under which the Resident, who was not a strong man, fairly staggered.

‘Lord, what an outfit!’ exclaimed the Officer with a grin. ‘We must hope the fish hereabouts are unsophisticated!’

‘I am not out for fish. A young hippo is more in my line,’ said the Resident, eyeing his great rod without enthusiasm. ‘Don’t we need a net?’

'Haven't one. Can't get one. Besides, it's a seine you'd want. Come on. We should just hit off the evening rise.'

'If there is such a thing,' remarked the other drily.

At the river's edge they found a small boat awaiting them. Never before had the paddler seen fly or spoon, and he stared amazed as the Resident very gingerly projected his scaffolding pole of a rod amidships while the Officer prepared to operate from the bow. Then he seated himself in the stern, took up his paddle, and the canoe shot out into the stream.

With the sinking of the water great shoals and bars had appeared, and a hundred yards or more from the shore a bright strip of yellow sand had emerged. Beyond it the main stream ran gaily over little rocks and shallows, but on the hither side there lay a big pool, still and apparently very deep. It was heavily overshadowed by trees, for here the vegetation came right down to the water's edge.

'Now which shall it be? Shallows or pool?' asked the Officer.

'You're the expert, not I,' replied the Resident, who had never caught a fish in his life and never expected to.

'Well, you're out for big game. We'll try the pool. You troll, I'll throw.'

The pool was three hundred yards long and half as much in width. Up and down, criss-cross the boy paddled. But nothing stirred. The Officer, a dry-fly man in theory though a wet one in practice, cast with punctilio, and though the weak joint flailed the flies at every throw he constantly remarked on the beauty of his art to the Resident, who smoked peacefully and paid but scant attention to his rod. Slowly the sun sank behind the trees and the evening turned chilly with the night breeze. At last, wearying of his exertions, the Officer wound up his line and nodded to the boy, who, glad of his coming release and with a clear sheet of water before him, gave a vigorous stroke. The canoe shot forward, the pearl spoon swept sharply round, the reel screamed and the rod would most certainly have gone overboard had it not been wedged under a cross-piece.

The Resident grabbed his unwieldy weapon, almost upsetting the canoe in his agitation. 'What's happened? There's something on the line!'

'Here, hand me the rod!' said the Officer. 'Keep way on the boat, boy. Gently now!'

'What the devil is it? Can you feel anything?' enquired the Resident, as he peered over the side into the black depths.

'If it's a fish it's a dead one. There's nothing pulling. Curse this thing, I can't move it.' The Officer struggled with the reel which, having been carelessly wound on the banks of some far-off salmon river, had jammed. 'Get hold of the line and pull it in.'

The line came in hand over hand. A few feet below the surface a light-coloured object became faintly visible and slowly rose to the top. The Resident leaned over and lifted it into the boat.

'What is it? A huge ring of some sort,' said the Officer, rather disgruntled at so uneventful an ending to an afternoon's fishing. 'It seems well caught up in the line anyway. We'll have to cut it, I expect.'

'Got a knife, boy?' asked the Resident, turning to the paddler.

'It's heavy, and silver too, I believe,' went on the Officer, holding the ring aloft whilst he tugged at the spoon which had wound itself round and round the catch. 'Must weigh nearly a couple of pounds. Too large for a bracelet. Must be an anklet or—'

'Give it here,' interrupted the Resident rather abruptly, 'that's enough now.'

His friend looked at him with surprise. But something in the other's face checked all remark. He handed over the treasure trove and returned to the business of unravelling the line. The Resident pushed the ring under a cloth.

'Home, boy. Sharp now,' he ordered.

Dusk had deepened into night and the Residency lights were burning before the two men reached home.

'Wash, a cocktail, then dinner. And thank the Lord, there's the home mail!' said the Officer.

They dined almost in silence. Both were engrossed with papers over a month old, but when the table had been cleared and the servant had left the house, the Officer laid aside the *Field*, and pushed back his chair.

'Well, what's the wheeze? I gathered something was amiss.'

'Did you happen to notice the boy's face when he caught sight of that ring?'

'I did not. Why?'

'He turned absolutely green with fright. It seemed the less said about it the better.'

'That's odd. Where is it?'

'I'll get it.'

The Resident crossed the room, and opening a small safe that stood in one corner, took from it the afternoon's catch. He laid

it on the table, where under the rays from the lamp it glinted and glistened. There was no doubt it was a beautiful ornament, finely and skilfully carved.

'By Jove! I'm no judge of these things, but it seems unusually good,' exclaimed the Officer running his finger up and down the finely wrought scales. 'What's it meant to represent?'

'A crocodile with a fish in its mouth. And it was not made yesterday, nor yet a hundred years ago, I'll warrant. See how it's worn in parts. Odd for such a thing to be in the pool.'

A step sounded outside the house. Both men looked up. In the doorway stood a tall, powerful native dressed in cheap and tawdry European clothes, and wearing a bowler hat upon his head.

'Good evening, gentlemen,' he said, speaking in excellent English, but with an easy familiarity that instantly infuriated the Officer.

'Who the devil are you, and what do you want here?' he demanded roughly.

'I am the Chief Adviser of the King, and my name is Mr. Cheek,' replied the man.

'Your godfathers and godmothers named you well. Kindly remove your hat.'

Mr. Cheek complied with no very good grace. Then he advanced further into the room. 'I bring a message from the King,' he announced.

'How is it I have never seen you before?' enquired the Resident.

'I have been away from the town on business. Now I have returned.'

'Worse luck!' growled the Officer.

'And what is the message that necessitates your disturbing us at this hour?'

'It is an urgent message. The King hears that you have caught that—that thing,' and Mr. Cheek pointed to the great anklet. 'He demands that you put it back at once and fish no more in the pool.'

'Demands, does he?' burst out the Officer before the Resident could answer. 'And has His Majesty any further orders for us? Infernal insolence, I call it! Tell him we shall fish when and where we like and he can go to hell!'

'Stop a minute. Let's get to the bottom of this,' said the Resident. 'Mr. Cheek, I do not understand such a message. Have the goodness to explain.'

Mr. Cheek shot a look of intense dislike at the Officer, then he addressed himself to the Resident, and his tone was less insolent. 'That ring, sir, is big fetish. Once a long time ago, the fetish who lives in the pool was angry, and he sent famine and pestilence to this town. Many people die and there was great trouble. They were poor and had nothing to give the fetish, but the King had that ring and at last he gave that. Then the fetish was pleased, and he stop the sickness and go and live in the ring. If you take it from the pool he will be angry again, and will send disaster to the town once more.'

'What rot! You and your fetishes! And I suppose you consider yourself an educated man!' said the Officer, eyeing Mr. Cheek up and down with undisguised contempt.

'What I say is true,' cried the black man vehemently. 'I beg you to put——'

'And I beg *you* to mind your own business. Now—get out.'

'Let me attend to this, please. It is really my affair,' interrupted the Resident. 'Mr. Cheek, I have listened to what you have to say. Tell the King the Officer and I will consider his request. It is too late to do anything now. I wish you good evening.'

Mr. Cheek looked as if he would like to press his point. Then he changed his mind, bowed to the Resident, ignored the Officer, and departed.

'How you can discuss things with a brute like that, beats me,' said the Officer. 'Next I shall hear that *you* believe in fetishes and bad luck and all the rest of the tosh.'

'It isn't what I believe—nor yet what you believe—that matters. It is what the people believe. Besides,' went on the Resident thoughtfully, 'it is hard to know what one believes in a country like this.'

The other man stared. Then he shrugged his shoulders. 'My dear chap, you had better take a dose of quinine. Anyway, I'm for bed. Night, night.'

Left alone, the Resident lighted a pipe and gave himself over to reflection. The unlucky catch of the afternoon, coupled with the visit of Mr. Cheek, disquieted him. Unlike the Officer—who had come out to West Africa in search of a career and had a contempt for the people that hardly admitted of his disliking them—he was not an ambitious man, and had from the first interested himself in the customs and beliefs of those amongst whom he was to live.



He had grown to have a curious sympathy with and insight into the mind of the black man, and consequently he bore a great reputation among the Coast tribes. Many and curious were the quarrels and complaints brought before him, and nothing, so long as it was genuine, was too trifling for his attention.

That the anklet was credited with supernatural powers of unusual potency, was obvious. The black man appreciates his treasures as much as does anyone else, and for an ornament of such value to have been sacrificed as an act of propitiation to an angry god, spoke for itself. That he had dredged it up at all was most unfortunate. That having dredged it up and learned the history of its submersion he should keep it, seemed to him out of the question. But on the other hand, for the Resident of the District to return the ring to the pool at the request of a native king terrified of fetish vengeance, might seem to that king and his subjects an act of weakness, and an acknowledgment on the part of the Government of the power of their god. Also, he frankly admitted to himself, it went much against the grain of one who was an ardent collector to relinquish so remarkable a curio. He looked intently at the great circlet as it lay on the table. It seemed to gather to itself the rays from the lamp and reflect them with unusual brilliancy, but there looked nothing sinister or menacing about it. He sighed and locked it up again. Then he turned out the lamp, crawled under his mosquito curtain, and was soon fast asleep.

'Hullo! Safe and sound still?' was the Officer's greeting when they met the following morning.

The Resident laughed good-humouredly. 'Even so, my facetious friend. What have we for breakfast? And what the devil is that noise?'

A shouting and wailing rose from the town. Then a knot of people rushed past the house. They were yelling and beating on pots and pans. As more and more people streamed by, the Residency servants caught the excitement. The cook rushed from his kitchen waving a saucepan, the house boys abandoned their work and joined the throng. The two white officials hastened into the open, and the Officer just managed to lay hold of the interpreter as he was running by.

'What's all this?' he shouted, hardly able to make himself heard above the din.

'The locusts come, sir. The locusts come,' panted the man.

'Good Lord!' ejaculated the Resident in dismay. 'Where are they? Which way are they coming?'

The interpreter pointed to the eastward. 'Across the plain they come, sir. From the river you can see them.'

With difficulty the two men pushed their way to the river-bank, from where they could get an uninterrupted view of the plain. There right away to the eastward a small black cloud was moving along the horizon line towards them, and even as they watched the cloud trebled in size. It was coming with great rapidity and would soon reach the town.

The water-side was packed with excited screaming crowds. Some were swinging backwards and forwards wailing and beating on gongs and pots, others were building huge fires. But the Resident noticed with uneasiness that all were frightened.

'Ah, there's the smoke!' exclaimed the Officer as some coarse grass and branches caught. 'But they'll want bigger fires than that if they are to stop this swarm. It's a large one, and if it comes as it is coming now it will pass right over the town.'

'And if it settles it will mean pestilence and famine,' said the Resident quietly.

For a moment the Officer looked startled. Then he laughed. 'Bit of luck for Mr. Cheek, eh? Talking of angels, here he is. He appears to combine the offices of Chief Adviser and Fetish Priest.'

Mr. Cheek, divested of his European clothes and wearing a native cloth of black and red, and with bits of white rag tied to his legs and arms, hurried up accompanied by his attendants. As he passed the Officer he half stopped, spat on the ground, cursed and hurried on again.

'Damn his insolence,' said the greatly incensed Officer, 'I'll have something to say to him by-and-by. Here's the swarm.'

The black cloud appeared almost in front of them and came sweeping along till half the town was blotted from view. Trails of locusts, like wisps of smoke, blew out on either side of the main body. A big brown grasshopper an inch and a half long hit the Resident on the shoulder, glanced off and lay kicking on the ground.

'This is beastly! Let's find shelter.'

They ran to the nearest hut and crouched under its broad overhanging roof. As the host swept over, the sky grew dark and a ceiling of locusts was formed at a height of twenty or thirty feet. How thick it was it was impossible to guess, but in width it extended right over the town. As the flight continued thousands of dead

and dying insects fell, while the roofs and buildings were covered with their droppings. It was an extraordinary spectacle. The hordes passing overhead, the noise of their wings sounding like some strong breeze and the falling bodies thumping on the thatched roofs and hard ground.

'Thank Heaven, they aren't going to settle!' said the Resident, peering out from his shelter. 'If they had, the farms and plantations would have been wiped out. As it is, the damage will be enormous. Those that have fallen will probably breed and will not be got rid of for a couple of years. We shall have to be careful of the water.'

'I'm going to rout out the sergeant. There may be trouble when this is over,' said the Officer, and turning up the collar of his coat he sallied forth.

It was past midday when the last of the swarm vanished over the town. They had arrived soon after ten and between those hours had flown steadily. As soon as it was evident there were no more to appear the Resident started for the market-place. As he walked up the street it was impossible not to crunch the fat pink bodies under foot. The whole place was littered with them.

He found the King and his elders already assembled in palaver. Of Mr. Cheek there was no sign. Though too overwhelmed to act for themselves they received him without cordiality, and the people eyed him in sullen silence. He read distrust and uneasiness on all faces. However, under the supervision of himself and the Officer, everyone set to work to clear the roofs and alleys and to sweep the insects into heaps. These were carried to the river-bank and burnt. Before midnight the town was fairly clear.

Tired as he was, the Resident felt disinclined for sleep, and after the Officer had taken himself off, he lit a cigarette and strolled up and down outside the house. All was peaceful and serene, but as he listened to the sound of muffled drumming that came up to him from the town borne faintly on the night breeze, he felt apprehensive of what the morrow might hold in store. Presently he re-entered the house, and anxious not to disturb his sleeping friend, he opened the safe cautiously, lifted out the great anklet, and gently closed it again. Then, slipping off his thin flannel coat, he looked round for something warmer. Across a chair near to hand, lay an old tunic belonging to the Officer. This he put on, and dropping the ring into one of its capacious pockets, and leaving the lamp burning, he went out into the night.

Under the trees the darkness was intense, though brilliant moonlight flooded the land. The stillness was unbroken, the drumming had ceased. Mists lay thick upon the ground, and he made his way with some difficulty to the edge of the pool and seated himself on a large stone in the deepest shadow. The beauty of the night and place appealed to him. In the shade the pool showed coal black, but in the moonlight bright silver, and the sound of the river was more distinct than in the day-time. From round a bend a long way off came the echoes of a great splashing, probably from some hippos. Once something stirred in the bushes near-by. These were the only sounds, and they soon ceased.

He had been there for some time, for his third cigarette was ashes, when he again heard a slight movement in the undergrowth, this time quite distinctly. Then something seemed to touch his foot. Startled, he looked down, but it was too dark to see anything. The rustling grew louder, and from out of the night there arose a low, mournful cry, so plaintive and eerie that he felt his flesh creep. He sprang to his feet and faced round. Someone screamed, the bushes parted, and he was hurled into the water with a naked man on top of him.

From the outset of that nightmare struggle the Resident was under-dog. First because he was in danger of drowning, second because his assailant had twice his strength. Fortunately the spot where he fell was shallow water and he kicked and splashed until he regained his feet and got a grip on his opponent. Struggling and fighting, he forced him back on to dry ground. He made a grab at a black hand, but that hand held a knife and he cut his fingers badly. At this discovery his heart sank, in spite of his outraged dignity, bewilderment and anger. Every moment he expected to feel the sting of the blade in his back.

But his blood was up. He would not be beaten! He clasped his hands behind his opponent's neck and tried to bring him down. Though nearly spent he gripped with renewed effort, and the battle between white man and black on the banks of an African river, raged with fresh force. Sinewy black fingers fastened themselves round his throat and tried to strangle him. He clutched and kicked to no purpose, he could not free himself. Everything turned red, then black. He grew weak, threw up his hands and pitched backwards over a root out into the open.

But to the Resident in his distress came relief. His throat was freed and he gasped for breath. A gentle breeze fanned his face.

Gradually the mists before his eyes cleared, the dancing black specks steadied then vanished. The swaying trees and bushes stood still. Then, standing motionless before him in the bright moonlight, he saw—Mr. Cheek.

‘What was all that about?’ he gasped faintly.

The black man made no reply. He seemed hardly to hear the question, but stood staring down apparently at a complete loss. The Resident tried to sit up, but he felt in a bad way and sank back again sick and giddy.

‘What was it all about?’ he repeated.

‘I—I did not know it was you, sir,’ replied Mr. Cheek in a low voice.

‘You did not know it was me? Then who the deuce did you think it——’ He stopped abruptly. His glance had fallen on the sleeve of the coat he was wearing.

For some minutes neither man spoke. The Resident was trying to regain his scattered wits and to staunch the blood that was flowing from his lacerated hand, Mr. Cheek, uncertain what course to take, took none.

Soon the Resident struggled to his feet. He felt better and able to stand. ‘How did you discover your mistake?’ he asked quietly.

‘When you fall out into the light, sir, I see your face.’

‘What were you doing down here?’

Mr. Cheek drew himself up. ‘I am a fetish priest, sir. I come here to mourn for the misfortune which has befallen the town. I weep. I cry aloud because the great ring has gone.’

‘Yes. Go on.’

‘Then, sir,’ went on the black man, speaking in a low, passionate tone, ‘I see—I see you. Then I go mad. I say to myself, “Behold! here is a man who laughs at the black man and sneers at his gods. He steal the sacred ring and bring disaster to the town. He shall die. The fetish shall have better sacrifice than the ring. He shall have human sacrifice.” Then, sir, I scream and I spring.’

The Resident watched Mr. Cheek curiously. Where was the insolent familiarity of the evening before? With his travesty of European clothes the black man had shed his travesty of European manners. He stood now, a savage among savage surroundings, but a dignified and arresting figure for all that. That he was genuine the Resident never doubted for one moment, and any personal resentment he had felt towards him, died away. Clearly

and sympathetically he viewed the situation through the eyes of the priest.

'It is true,' he said, 'that we caught the ring on a fish hook. But white men do not steal from black men, and if they laugh it is because they do not understand. I came here to-night to put the ring back in the pool.'

The face of the black man changed in the most extraordinary way. Despair gave way to bewilderment, bewilderment to relief. When he spoke there was something in his manner that had not been there before. Regret perhaps, liking perhaps, respect certainly.

'You come to put it back,' he muttered. He looked away from the Resident, and then down on the ground. Then he said, 'Thank you.'

The Resident thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out the great ring. 'Here it is. Take it.'

With the ring in his hand Mr. Cheek turned towards the pool. He walked to the water's edge, raised both arms above his head and stood motionless. Then out of the night again rose up a cry. But this time it was not the low mournful wail, but a cry of exultation, a cry of triumph. Three times it rang out, then there was silence. Then came a dull splash. The ring had once more returned to its home beneath the dark waters.

When the Resident spoke again it was in a different tone. 'Now, Mr. Cheek, I'm sorry for what has happened to-night. But I think it would be well if business again took you away from the town. But I count on you to see that the place is quiet before you leave.'

Mr. Cheek looked at him. 'I am sorry too, sir. I did not intend to hurt you. The town will be quiet.'

'Very well. I accept your assurance. Good night.' With that the Resident turned on his heel and made his way back to the house.

It seemed to him he had not been asleep ten minutes when he was awakened by the Officer. 'You will be interested to hear,' said that gentleman, thrusting his head round the door, 'that the precious Mr. Cheek has legged it. I sent the sergeant after him, there was that little affair of yesterday to be settled, and he found he had left the town a couple of hours ago. Afraid to face me, I expect. Knew he had gone a bit too far, eh?'

'Possibly,' said the Resident.

W. H. ADAMS.



## 'THE BARRETTS OF WIMPOLE STREET.'

## A COMMENT.

In the modern trick of analysing human conduct there seems to be one infallible rule—when in doubt, invoke a complex. Critics are not satisfied with finding a cause in some exaggeration of a motive which is active in but a limited number of mankind. Such a thing is perhaps too remote from their own consciousness to be fully realised ; strange behaviour must be referred to some impulse, as urgent as it is widespread, that is common in some degree to all humanity, and therefore may be conceived of by all or any as the germinal force that may swell and swell into a monstrosity. Such was the undercurrent of a letter that came to me last May from Boston, Mass., written in a large, and I judge, feminine script, but modestly anonymous, unless indeed the fact of its ending abruptly at the end of the third sheet meant that a fourth sheet had been accidentally omitted.

At that date I knew nothing of the Browning play that was in preparation. Whether some repercussion from London had affected Boston, or Boston shared in the particular wave of interest which had begotten the play in London, I cannot say ; at all events the letter was informed by a similar preoccupation, the attempt to resolve from within the tangle of inordinate act and inadequate motive in Mr. Barrett's oppressive domination over his family. To lay bare the physical spring whose overgrowth has broken the normal balance of impulse and control is the new determinism, and to find that spring infallibly in the primitive relations of man and woman is to be in the correct psychological fashion. Following this fashion the writer of the letter asked whether it had not occurred to me, while editing the volume of *Letters from Elizabeth Barrett Browning to her sister Henrietta*, that the jealous affection of Mr. Barrett for Elizabeth was rooted in something more than simple parental affection ; that there being but twenty-one years between them, she seemed to belong more to his own generation than to the next, and therefore his feeling for her was coloured by the male possessive instinct with its intolerance of any intruder upon the domain of her affections,—the same resentful, possessive intolerance that a lover

feels towards a rival. The writer proceeded to give a list of men, including the most blameless of sovereigns along with characters of opposite repute, who had married early and, with or without scandal, had repulsed their daughters' suitors and kept the young women at home in a mere prison of misplaced affection. Did not all this show that men should be forbidden to marry too young and so break down nature's appointed barriers between successive generations?

I was not convinced. I had never heard, for instance, of the question arising in that land of typically early marriages, the old Boer Republic, and as regards Mr. Barrett, the writer of the letter overlooked the relevant fact that he opposed the marriage and escape of his sons as well as his daughters.

In the absence of name and address I could not point this out to my correspondent; I was the more interested, however, when I heard that the play had been put on the stage, and that, to begin with, the same 'complex' had been invoked in an extreme and exceptional form. Clearly my correspondent had got wind of this in some way or other, had drawn a deduction and sought parallel cases. But this complex was speedily cut out, being indeed an extraneous invention and patently in bad taste. However, as complex there must be to explain the fierce driving power behind this fanatical rendering of the *patria potestas*, a more plausible invention has been substituted:—invention—for it is, when coldly examined, no more than a tissue of psychological possibilities which, if they had existed, might have produced the recorded action, but for which there is no evidence beyond ingenious conjecture exploiting recent mental pathology. Given the supposed impulses and experiences with their profound reactions upon the mind, let them take their place in the framework of a stark and uncompromising religion, and they might well lend overwhelming force to that religious intensity which we know was his. Religious intensity alone is hardly enough to convince the audience that he would have taken the strange line which he actually took; it is the ingenuity of the playwright that provides these strongly imagined helps. They bolster up an historical play, but they are not history. As dramatic glosses on history, they heighten the dramatic tension of a most crucial moment in the play. Stirred for an instant out of his rigid self-restraint by the provocative *calineries* of Bella, his pretty minx of a niece, he drives everyone else from the room and breaks out to Elizabeth the two agonising

secrets of his life. Why does he love her alone of all his children ? She was the first-born, child of the finer love with which his marriage began. She embodied and continued that love which was the highest expression of his life. She was all of it that was left to him. But thereafter marriage, so well begun, degenerated into a mere circumstance of life's crude satisfactions ; in his wife, love gave way to fear ; the other children as they came were symbols of the earth, earthy. After his wife's death, two years of stern repression brought him to the rigid course he had since pursued and the steady resolution that no child of his, if he could possibly help it, should marry and gather the inevitable Dead Sea fruits of marriage.

This passionate self-revelation manages to account for the ban upon marriage for sons as well as daughters, even if it leaves little room for those references to his tender care for his motherless little boys which one recalls in earlier letters of Elizabeth's ; but how many of those who see the play without previous knowledge of the *Letters* will guess that the dramatist here goes beyond his book ? How many will not take this gloss to be as authoritative as the phrases and the episodes drawn from the actual records ?

No doubt the dramatist will say, 'I must make my play dramatic ; and what is dramatic I must make intelligible. This can only be done by my interpretation of the character behind the action ; here is the most effective interpretation I can put forward on general principles, and from the point of view of the play and of myself it is therefore justified.' For the play in the abstract, yes ; for history, and that recent history, largely documented and very near to the living, it is hardly fair. History says that Edward Barrett possessed an *idée fixe*, fanatically entwined with his religious outlook, that he was just according to his Biblically restricted lights, that he was sincerely convinced that he knew better than the members of his family what was good for them. Like a high patriarch of old, he insisted on unquestioning obedience under penalty of excommunication from the all-embracing system, spiritual and material, which had enfolded them from childhood with the inspirational force of a domestic religion. By this time Elizabeth has learnt to call it 'an obliquity of the will, and one laughs at it till the turn comes for crying.' Moreover, he held the purse-strings tight save in the case of the crippled Elizabeth, who had a small fortune of her own. But there is no overt evidence either of his revulsion of feeling which, it is

suggested, revolutionised his life, or of any special defect of kindness towards his younger children, though it was the gifted Elizabeth of whom he was most proud and with whose intelligence and warm heart he was most in sympathy. There is no direct evidence again that his charming and gracious wife, a woman several years his senior, came to live in fear of her husband, unless we take Elizabeth's remark, 'her only fault was that she was too yielding,' as implying that her submissiveness was due to fear. And the interview in which Mr. Barrett unburdens his soul to his daughter is undoubtedly a piece of poetic license. History shakes her head, though Art may be pleased. For having harnessed a bridled and sophisticated History to her car, Art has her triumph in the heart of the drama, where the caged victim of perverted love is released by the inspiration of a love which brings new hope, new health, and winged freedom. In the acting of Miss Frangcon Davies we feel the personal charm of the poet-nature, too elusive to be recaptured for us by the pencil in the ringleted and spaniel-like portraits that have come down to us. Mr. Cedric Hardwicke, with no effort beyond being the part he plays, brings with him the cold, repressive cloud of urbane fanaticism and relentless conviction that surely must have dominated that dark house in Wimpole Street. Though we know that release is to come at the last, we are deeply stirred by the clash of strong opposites, infallibility wrecked by its own excess and provoking the growth of the finer spirit which is to defeat it. The audience watches to the end, silent and intent; the play as a play, succeeds brilliantly, and remains unforgettable. The memory of Elizabeth herself is indeed well served; she comes to life again for this generation, which, if it can no more attune itself to the bygone mode of her poetry, will pass on with fresh and living admiration for the woman herself and the flame which burned within her.

Robert Browning was no easy part to play, the poet who had already discerned her and been discerned by her as a kindred spirit, the life-bringing breath from without, the love-inspired inspirer of the impossible hope and love and new will to live, the heart that had never before found an equal heart to awaken it, the resistless wooer, the subtle breaker of chains. The stage cannot give us the cumulative effect of those months of tense meetings and outpoured letters; for those who do not know their story the sweeping victory seems rather abrupt, and Browning himself, though we know he was breezy, and quite unlike the poet of senti-

mental fiction, strikes one as designed, perhaps by way of emphatic contrast, a trifle too robustiously.

For the rest, the Muse of History must be captious, if not severely critical. To make light and shade and dramatic sport, the characters are painted here and pinched there, touched up and remodelled till some are unrecognisable. Of course the dramatist required them to be foils to the chief characters, or to afford comic relief, but when one reflects on the reality, certain travesties are offensive to their still surviving children. With what feelings do the sons of Henrietta and Surtees Cook, not least one who has followed the same profession of arms with high distinction, regard the figure of their father brought on the stage as no better than a numskull and a popinjay (the real episode being a pretty enough scene)? Surtees Cook, a kinsman of the Barretts and so a privileged visitor, was no fool, though Mr. Barrett disliked his Tractarianism. And so far from being a youngster in his first fine uniform, which gay Henrietta must needs show off to her sister, a dull soldier tongue-tied with his cousins, he was a man of forty at the date of the play, with character and culture enough to win Elizabeth's approval and affection. Henrietta herself is the most charmingly drawn of the secondary characters, but more like seventeen than seven-and-thirty, so gay, bright, impetuous, still youthfully enamoured of the polka. The years of oppression, the tentative movements towards rebellion, and their forcible suppression on a former occasion, are legitimately enough telescoped into this crucial year, though the sum total is not quite the impression left by Elizabeth's description: 'Poor Henrietta has suffered silently, with that softest of possible natures, which hers is indeed, beginning with implicit obedience, and ending with something as unlike it as possible.'

It is curious to note how the question of age is slurred over in the play. Is it to win a topical sympathy in an audience which is being everlastingly plied with the claims of the young that they are allowed to see in it the thrilling revolt of eager youth against crabbed age? But the oppressed who rebel are not young, even by the standard of to-day. By the standard of 1846 they were already middle-aged. Henrietta at thirty-seven and Elizabeth at forty were liable to be set down as old maids. If suffering youth is tragic, a more subtle tragedy could have been made out of the longer servitude, the more astounding rebellion, of youth's older sisters. But on the stage no one ignorant of the books would

dream that there was room for this greater tragedy. Nor would such a one gather that Browning was thirty-four, six years the junior of his Elizabeth.

The brothers, ranging in age from thirty-five to twenty-four, march on as a perfect stage-army of fraternal affection. They make a characteristic background for life in that house: still shackled and colourless, but sympathetic to their sisters' struggle, and some of them silently planning the way of their own release. But they are not actively necessary to the development of the plot, and are left as foils or stage property.

Surtees Cook was unkindly handled, but the unfortunate Mr. Bevan, engaged to the girls' cousin, Bella Hedley, is dragged on as the merest figure of fun, a 'swell' of superlative coxcombry, just to make amusing play with a type of the period. Again, this must be offensive to his descendants, for there is no shadow of justification for the caricature, unless in the fact that he was a rich young man. His wealth enabled him to travel widely, and by an odd coincidence, he had lodged in Florence in the very house where the Brownings afterwards lodged, and left behind him a most cordial impression on his landlord and an Italian grammar out of which, as it happened, Wilson, Mrs. Browning's faithful maid, proceeded to learn Italian.

Bella Hedley, too, the Barretts' cousin—it is not the Browning letters that make her out a provocative minx. That is an artifice of the dramatist to bring about the painful breakdown of self-control which leads to Mr. Barrett's confession revealing the supposed key to his strange tyranny.

Here once more is a challenge to the ethics of the stage. How far is it right and proper not merely to put a real character on the stage, but to manipulate that character, to fit it with qualities and actions nowhere justified by extant evidence, even, perhaps, directly contrary to what little we know, in order to give light and shade to a dramatic representation and throw into strong relief the central figures or the theme which these are taken to typify? After the time of bold caricatures which not only amused at the moment but were insidious propaganda against individuals and progressive thought, Athenian Comedy was forbidden to present anyone 'by name.' That was to prevent contemporary abuse and misrepresentation. Our safeguard is the law of libel, which rather expensively protects the living, and in extreme cases where the libel is calculated to provoke a breach of the peace, the dead



also. Otherwise the dead are only protected by respect for historical accuracy and consideration for the feeling of their immediate descendants. No one has any objection to the presentation of our national heroes and our typical individuals of the past, either in historical novels or in the more intense light of the stage. They need not be flawless; history provides for that; but it is only as they are farther away in the past or as that past is revealed in a new light, that conjecture fairly ekes out the limitations of knowledge, and a writer may venture to ascribe to real persons those unrecorded trains of thought or social traits typical of the times which he thinks dramatically effective, and plausible for his interpretation of events. As regards minor characters, the less known about them the easier they are to dress up anew without offence to known fact or mere likelihood.

Should there be a definite time-limit, the lapse of a century or the extinction of direct descendants of the next generation? Should the matter still be left solely to a writer's taste and discretion? Whichever it be, the ethics of the stage demand that named characters should not be mishandled, should not be played contrary to character. It is all very well to make a play out of some well-known historical episode with a transparent veil of new names and with minor characters presenting contemporary types without being pinned down to known individuals; there the author has a free hand. When he comes to particularise, to depict named individuals, he delivers himself over to History. He is morally bound not to disregard personal integrity and the claims of individual truth. He may make up a contemporary saint or sinner or figure of fun to suit the occasion; the highest literary skill gives him no moral right to pervert a true reputation in order to make a play-goer's holiday.

The public may turn an impatient ear to considerations such as these in face of an engrossing play, rich in fine material, constructed with art so as to hold interest to the last. But they are very real preliminaries to the perfection of art as it affects life, and art neglects them at her peril. Untruth is an offence against life itself. Great or small, it proportionately corrodes the substance of art. The more we concern ourselves with true findings about men themselves and the living society they make, the more we shall resent perversions of real character. They deface history; they poison our judgments, whether of men, of society, or of the art which employs them.

LEONARD HUXLEY.

## THE TRIUMPH OF THE TEA TRAYS.

### A TALE OF THE TIGRIS.

BY LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR GEORGE MACMUNN, K.C.B., K.C.S.I.,  
D.S.O.

SCATTERED in the peaceful corners of the land are to be found the homes of those who have served the State in times of stress and anger, with their swords beaten into ploughshare and golf club, often enough with little of companionship beyond their innate content and the pipe that sings and whistles in its comfortable foulness. It was to a typical resting-place of such a one under the lee of the South Down that I hied myself to look up an old friend, and while waiting in the sitting-room of his stone cottage, I poked around its fittings. You will generally find them much the same. A group or two framed, Jorrocks, the head of a shrapnel shell, Adam Lindsay Gordon's verses, a volume of two of Kipling, a photo of some quite inaccessibly beautiful feminine, the Queen of the Might-have-been, a rod and a gun and a box of tackle. These are the rules; after that, season to taste.

But in this particular cot, as I saw my friend come up the garden path in his old service breeches and gaiters, my eye caught an unusual trophy, nothing less than a glass case on the wall and in it a Rockingham teapot without a spout, and under it the photograph of an Indian servant with his hand across his breast, and one finger missing.

After greetings I demanded the meaning of the teapot relic and the fingerless man hard by, and this is what he told me:

'Why, you remember the story of Kut and how Sir John Nixon and his Headquarters staff had to do a bunk before Townsend got shut up, and how his convoy of steamers was attacked by the *Bedus*, jolly nearly done in. That teapot is a relic of it. You remember the yarn.'

No! I shall not allow my friend of the Sussex Den to tell it; I will tell it my own way, for I know the story well, only I had forgotten it, and he and his teapot but acted as the remembrancer, tucked away under the South Down. And this is what there is to it. If anyone remembers the story of the Ridge at Delhi, and the

valley of the shadow of death, the open valley behind Hindu Rao's House, along which rebel round shot hopped and skipped, they may remember how the cook boys of the 60th Rifles, with the riflemen's dinners, skipped and hopped in unison as the round shot trundled by, absolutely regardless of anything save getting the dinners to their masters. The story of the teapots is just such another, only with a tinge more drama and glory.

It was late autumn on the Tigris, and Townsend, after his advance towards Bagdad—that advance which should never have been ordered—and his quite brilliant temporary victory under the old Sassanian dome of the hall of audience of the Khushroes, which men wrongly call an arch, was falling back on Kut with the Turk at his heels.

From Kut to Bagdad by road is a little over a hundred miles; the winding Tigris must needs demand more than thrice that distance to satisfy its insistence on pear-shaped curves and hairpin bends. The gentlemen of England who sit at home in ease and were so busy just then with their arm-chair strategy had asked for a blow at Bagdad, regardless of the fact that steamers to implement their wishes lay thousands of miles away, across monsoon-swept seas.

Sir John Nixon and his staff fell off their perch too, hypnotised perhaps by the dreaded effect in the East of the escape from Gallipoli. Casting from them all that they had ever learnt of logistics and how armies live, not by ravens and cruses of oil, or the manna of the desert, they consented. The lesson of the long camel line and bullock train that the road to Kabul had taught them, forgotten when studied in terms of steamers and swift and winding rivers, was of no avail. Townsend, gallant vocative Townsend, Signor McStinger as the Army knew him, because of the song that he sang, marched up those hundred miles to Ctesiphon, with no adequate fleet behind him, and was now on his way back, with all the cursed jackal Arabs hanging on his skirts to murder his wounded and pilfer his dead.

Kut, which should be pronounced Koot, and is short for Kut el Omra, 'The castle of the Chiefs,' was the only town on the river between Amara and Bagdad, and it was the base from which Townsend had started. An important trading centre, dealing with the grain from that ancient Tigris bed now known as the *Shatt el Hai*, and a meeting-place for the caravans from the Persian hills, it had grown to a town of considerable size. In addition to its Arab population there were many Jew traders and Chaldean Christians,

the latter much concerned in furnishing crews for the Lynch steamers. The mosques had minarets, a fact which always denotes importance and well-to-do supporters, and in ordinary times the bustle of sailing craft of all kinds and sizes would be considerable.

At this moment when Townsend had turned back, the traffic was of course abnormal. Many Arab craft from Basra had brought up supplies and even lay in reserve as baggage carriers, with their muscular stalwart crews that tow their boats against wind starko, to the horror of the Indian soldiery, for many a mile. If you study the tablets from Tel el Amarna on the Nile, where for some strange reason some of the correspondence of King Hammurabbi, the Amraphel of Genesis, has been found, you will find that his Arab boatmen were the same mixture of efficiency and untrustworthiness as they are to-day. I rejoiced to see that even such peremptory orders as I used to send with hint of lash and gallows, anent missing bags of grain and sacks of potatoes, were sent in identical language by Hammurabbi, king of Babylon, twice a thousand thrice a hundred years before Christ, for there is no new thing under the sun.

If you want to know more about the Arabs who tow starko, why, the by-ways of the Prophet Ezekiel will enlighten you, for they were attractive to the women of Israel whose wimples and crisping pins and changeable apparel so enraged Isaiah, as well as their dallying with the inhabitants and the Chaldean captains.

But in addition to the Arab *mahelas* and *shaktus* with their burly crews, there was a little jam of British steamers, some from India and Burma, some the craft which the descendants of Captain Blossie Lynch, the companion of Euphrates Chesney, owned. Not only were there valuable steamers to get away before the Turkish net should envelop the town, but a host of sick and wounded. Also last but not least the whole of the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia, General Sir John Nixon, his Chief of the General Staff, his Adjutant and Quartermaster-General, and all the lesser stars of a headquarters, supply officers, medical officers, provost-marshals *et hoc genus omne*, and as the song used to say—

The General Commanding and his brigade-major  
And our fussy friend the D.A.Q.M.G.

It scans better when you say it than it looks on paper; it is always rather sad that the ribald rhymes of one's subaltern days come to lip just as one is getting to the serious part of a story.

Now Sir John Nixon realised at once that he could do no good

if he stayed to see Townsend straggle in, and that he must away with his galaxy, and take with him all the steamers and all the sick and wounded he could bundle aboard. Townsend would need support or relief and he was short enough of steamers and troops to do it with. So bustle and activity prevailed, the hospitals were cleared on to the steamers, twice as many as the decks would hold, with rations for the voyage down, and all through the night and the next morning the work went on. A river war is a fascinating thing with its bustle of steamers, its sidling and its chunking, its blowing of whistles and clanging of steamer bells. Later when Government took this phase of the national war more seriously, and the rivers of the world sent their steamers, the Nile and the Hooghly and the Brahmapootra, the Indus and the Irrawadi and even Father Thames himself with pleasure boats that still smelt of Bath buns, then that river of the Arabs was a sight to see. But even at this juncture, commissariat officers and embarkation officers sweated far into the night, to get off their loads of sick and wounded and great men. But getting away is a slow business and it was not till well on in the afternoon that the Commander-in-Chief could shake the commandant of Kut by the hand and charge him with last messages for Townsend. Then the bells clanged and the whistles went and the *Mejidieh* and the *Malamir* and the rest of the fleet chunked out from the banks and wended their way cautiously. The Tigris was low and the polemen from the Irrawadi and the Chaldeans from Bagdad were in the chains and the chant of the chainmen came up in cadence to the captain's ear. *Sare do baam ! sare do baam !* and then a change of note that gave the shallow warning, *Ek baam ek hath !* or the Arab equivalent, *Ma wajib . . . ma wajib !*

Down went the procession on the stream, and all the while the snows of the Persian hills known as the *Pusht-i-koh* shone clear in their snow line, where Lur and Bakhtiari chiefs kept watch and sold sheep to both belligerents, hills where long ago had dwelt, in the verbiage of Genesis, Tidal king of nations, which is none other than Tidal chief of tribes, tribes as now, which carry the brand of Cain in the Mongol fold, and where the Tidal of the day still intrigues to keep his hegemony.

The afternoon was peaceful enough and the sun shone steadily so that the sand and desert leapt and shimmered into mirage, and one could see 'wonders in the land of Ham.' But palm trees and minarets on the horizon where such do not exist, only fog the issues

and baffle the artilleryman, and make fighting a delusion. However, all was quiet enough in the desert round, and the wounded dozed and dreamt of the comforts in India to which they were hieing, and before and behind scudded the little Arab boats of those who had heard the bad news and thought that Kut might not be healthy, since the returning Turk might have a short way with those who had helped his enemies.

And then arose one of those accursed afternoon storms which the habitués of the Tigris know so well and dread. It blew like billy-oh from off the *Pusht-i-koh*, clouds of dust which choked the mouth and eyes and prevented the steersman steering. But it did much worse than that, as the wounded on the decks buried their heads in sheets and shirts, for it blew the ships full tilt to the shore, whence no amount of paddle chunking would bring them off. One after the other the five steamers followed suit, and plumped against the bank and there remained. The Commander-in-Chief swore, because he wanted to make Imam Ali Gharbi, the Shrine of Ali in the West, that night, and the skippers of the steamers swore too, chiefly because skippers hate being mastered by weather, and the wounded thought that a little bit more unpleasantness more or less was all in the day's wait.

Then something arose to give cause for their annoyance. They were chock-a-block on the curve of a big bend in the river, and the bows of the steamers faced due south. Looking westward there was little to be seen but some mounds, some ancient Sassanian *atash-gah*, dancing in the sky with a refraction of water below. Nearer on the flank were mounds of ancient dead canals. In the mirage or rather from out it, from the north-west came a spurt of rifle bullets. Rattle on the funnels, crash against the sides, the banks hardly protected the steamers. A cry from the decks where the wounded lay, hard to be hit while lying! What the devil was up? Turks? *Bedus*?<sup>1</sup> The Arabs would surely play any dirty trick. The bullets were coming obliquely through the mirage. Peering with glasses into the shimmer someone saw a line of mounted men, that came and vanished. The Commander-in-Chief climbed to the bridge of his steamer, while his A.D.C. remonstrated. The escort, a weak wing of the 67th and some oddments of Dorsets or Norfolks, sprang to their rifles and leapt ashore and then proceeded to extend, making for a bank to the north-west from whence the attack appeared to be coming. Soon the answering rattle of the

<sup>1</sup> *Bedu*, *Beduin* = graziers, as distinct from *Fellah*, *Fellahin* = cultivators.



escort added to the din. But the ships must have stood up to it with the setting sun full on them, dropping to the horizon behind Babylon, and again and again the sick decks were raked.

Then the fire commenced from the west and south-west. 'D—n these confounded *Bedus*,' said the Commander-in-Chief from his place on the bridge where his staff had insisted on padding him with bedding rolls, 'I shall have to take them on myself,' but the Headquarter staff and the sergeant clerks were already turning out. The Adjutant and Quartermaster-General and his little lot were already on shore, rifles in their hands, and the Chief of the General Staff was falling in his squad. The P.M.O. said that the Geneva Convention did not apply, and followed the others to the flood embankment that faced the direction of the new attack fifty yards on from the steamers. The Judge Advocate-General went, too, and the Director of Supplies, including the Headquarter camp commandant and the surgeon dentist, in fact all the Brass Hats from Brasshatville, as they would say in the States. A message had also gone to Kut to send someone down the right bank of the Tigris.

And as Brass Hats love a bit of a scrap everyone skipped over the side readily enough with any fire-arm he could raise. The sergeant clerks were mostly marksmen, and many had been prize-winners at Indian musketry meetings, and they nestled down to the bank of the bund and cuddled their rifles cunningly. A lively fire-fight was now in progress on a semicircle of nearly half a mile, and yet the *Bedu* had still the best of it, zip! against the smokestack, whack! against the boiler, whirr! along the wooden decks—it was past a joke, and the Brass Hats sat down to fire their damndest, jesting the while especially at the P.M.O., and the Judge Advocate-General, who were clumsy at the loading.

Four had slipped to four-thirty, and four-thirty to five, and still the hostile bullets sought their billets and the Brass Hats plugged away. The Chief of the General Staff had gone forward to order the escort to push on to attack the *Bedus* or at least ascertain where they were. The skipper of the leading steamer had crossed the river in a boat with a holdfast and a cable in the hope of trying to warp the craft out into the stream so that they could react to their paddles, a hopeless enough task in that wind. The Arab craft frightened at so much firing, had drawn in to the steamers as they drew abreast and were nestling under cover anxiously, while since it was watering time with the sand-grouse, they were coming down

in hundreds to the sand spit over the way, knowing full well that sportsmen had other fish to fry.

And the evening drew on, and the Chief fell a wondering if the wind would never drop, when there occurred a portent. At five-fifteen precisely, the mess khidmutghar of the Headquarter Mess clapped his hands and there emerged from the headquarter vessel down the gang-planks a procession, unperturbed and solemn, of officers' bearers, and each of them held aloft a tea-tray, a black japanned tea-tray with brown Rockingham atop, in single file for all the world like the haggises without the bagpipes at a St. Andrew's day dinner. And the procession filed solemnly across to where the sahibs of the Headquarters staff were solemnly firing, wheeled to the left, and led down the line taking his teapot each to each. Not a bearer flinched or dipped however so much the bullets whistled by, although the spout flew from a teapot, and some bearer was shot in the finger. It was magnificent and it was War with a big 'W,' for whether it was the arrival of this strange reinforcement that put the wind up the *Bedus*, as the mule carts did at the Battle of Shaiba, or whether (as more likely) reinforcements had been seen moving down-stream from Bagdad, certain it is that the fire almost immediately began to die away, and soon had ceased altogether.

Then, too, as the sun dipped to the horizon, the wind, as was the daily wont of such winds, died too, and the skippers became once again masters of their craft. It was 'in grapnels' and 'up gang-planks,' as the 67th Punjabis filed aboard with a few wounded, and the officers and men of the Headquarters came aboard the *Mejidieh*, and within half an hour of the debouch of the tea trays, the whole flotilla were off down-stream again and all the Arab craft with them.

And that was the end of that story, and Nabbi Baksh the 'Gift of the Prophet,' was having his finger tied up minus the top joint in the skipper's cabin, quite the hero of the hour, though in all the stirring days that followed few of us thought of it again, till here in the Sussex cottage was the spoutless Rockingham preserved in all honour with a photograph of the simple soul who had borne it.

*Sed Servitor sed pro magistro.*

## HADRIAN'S WALL.

No doubt, if only the truth were known,  
 When first the Britons quarried the stone  
     They grumbled, as Britons will,  
 That, although the Pict might, perhaps, be foiled  
 By the strange defences at which they toiled,  
 Still the place, you know, would be utterly spoiled  
     By this new wall climbing from hill to hill.

They asked each other if, after all,  
 It was really essential to put a wall  
     Where there wasn't a wall before :  
 They deplored the modern hurry and haste,  
 The love of change, the continual waste  
 Of public money, the lack of taste,  
     And all the things that one does deplore.

They may have gone further, and said at home,  
 As friends among friends, it was just like Rome,  
     This pompous boundary line,  
 Which was called a defence against the foe,  
 Though in fact it was traced for the world to know  
 How far her power and dominions go—  
     A symbol of conquest and a sign.

But the Emperor Hadrian, running atilt  
 Against local prejudice, built and built,  
     And the great wall went like a flame  
 Across wide moorlands that stretched away,  
 Storm-swept and desolate, dim and grey,  
 And scarce less lonely and bleak to-day  
     Than they were when Agricola's legions came.

What does it matter ? Barrier or boast,  
 This landmark reaching from coast to coast,  
     Time plays with it after all,  
 For the Roman's gone, but his tracks abide,  
 And it's we, the losers, the beaten side,  
 It is we who are proud of our conqueror's pride,  
     Who protect, if we may, his protecting wall.

ALFRED COCHRANE.

## SPARROWFIELD STORIES.

BY F. H. DORSET.

## II. SECRET SOCIETY.

THE house named 'St. Ives' stands just within the boundary of the Old Suburb and upon the border of the New, surrounded by a large garden wherein lurk little stone figures of gnomes and cupids in unexpected nooks. Until two years ago this property belonged to Serena Ross of Ross's Chocolates, who married the Honourable Peerly Graves.

The Ross Chocolate Factory stands at the opposite extremity of Sparrowfield, where the Old Suburb merges gently into London. For forty years old Mr. James Ross made a fortune out of it, during which time his two children, Jim and Serena, were born, twins, at the cost of their mother's life. James never re-married. Dying at the age of seventy-five, he bequeathed factory and fortune in equal portions to Jim and Serena, then well launched into their thirties. Serena immediately ceded to Jim the business side of the works and devoted herself to the social and philanthropic. Jim was already married and the father of sons, and inhabited a large house in the Old Suburb, so to Serena came 'St. Ives' and all that appertained to it, and ultimately, in addition, there came to her the Honourable Peerly Graves.

Peerly Graves, beyond a doubt, had suffered ill-luck before he found a haven in the heart and house of wealthy Serena, so if he married for money and ease who shall wholly blame him? The thirteenth child of an almost bankrupt Viscount, it had been made perfectly clear to him in extreme youth that he would have to work for his living. But at eighteen he left his Public School to join Kitchener's Army, rather welcoming a distraction from the difficult task of discovering any particular 'line' of his own. Having served his country without wound, decoration, or distinction, he was cast up by the tide of peace upon the shore of unemployment, and, being reasonably adroit at accounts, found himself at last a clerk in the principal Bank of Sparrowfield. The job had been obtained with some difficulty and largely by virtue of family wire-pulling, after a period during which Peerly had unaccountably turned his

back on friends of his own social standing and consorted with the uncultured; had gone out to Canada and returned, to Australia and returned likewise. His eldest brother, now inheritor of the title, had given him to understand that this was the last time in which he intended to interest himself as to whether Peerly sank or swam. Peerly, therefore, contrived to swim, keeping always a wary eye open for a safe landing somewhere at the earliest diplomatic moment. Who shall blame him, then, if, the haven of Serena's open arms suddenly appearing, he made all haste to climb ashore without too studiously analysing his real feelings for Serena? She wasn't so very plain, she was rich and not merely rich but generous. She was musical, and could sing charmingly at Charity concerts, and, had she really wished it, she might certainly have climbed into higher circles on the rungs of her golden ladder plus her marriage; but apparently she did not desire this. She seemed to be perfectly content to remain beneficently middle class, which surely spelt comfort and peace for an unambitious husband hampered with the tag-end of a title; in which Peerly was as much wrong as the self-centred can well be, for he took no pains to explore the recesses of his fiancée's mind before marriage and left out of count altogether the subtler forms of human aspiration. So he married in deep ignorance of two basic facts in Serena's character, namely, that she was domestically Puritanic and at the same time secretly occupied in storming the heights of Parnassus under the pen-name of 'Simon Rock.' This double knowledge did not entirely break upon him until the honeymoon was over and he faced the routine of daily life at 'St. Ives.' Then he learnt that Serena, in fearful secrecy, had been scribbling poems and romances for fifteen years, undeterred by the prolonged indifference of publishers to her wares. In a bureau in her bedroom dwelt hidden piles of manuscript, all of which she proposed to read aloud to Peerly during their quieter evenings alone together.

'I've never mentioned it to a soul, and I have everything typed up in Town,' she confided, sitting plumply on a 'dumpy' at her bridegroom's feet. 'Jim would laugh, and if a publisher knew I was one of Ross's Chocolates he might try to push my work on to the market by virtue of my name. I want to succeed on my own merits as a writer; and I *won't* pay for publication.'

'I'm afraid,' said Peerly dubiously, 'that I'm not a literary bloke, Sirry. Fact is, that sort of thing never appealed to me.'

'But it's going to appeal to you now,' replied Serena decidedly,

'because you love me, Peerless One, and now that you're free of the Bank you can help me with the really useful criticism of an ordinary man. You'll have time to read other people's books, too, and form your opinions. I've been so lonely—working in secret all alone. Wasn't it silly? But I was waiting for you, beloved, to come along; the only one who could ever understand.'

Peerly, looking down at a not uncomely pair of discreet white shoulders, experienced a twinge of compunction and kissed them. After a short interlude Serena produced the first bundle of manuscripts.

The principal effect of the yet unpublished works of 'Simon Rock' upon Peerly Graves was to produce a terrible thirst, and this not by virtue of drought but as the direct result of the over-absorption of honey. Serena's youth had been carefully guarded by her father and her aunts from too close an acquaintance with modern tendencies. Her reading had been supervised by an aunt who had been born in the era of Ruskin. To a certain extent Serena had emancipated herself. She was quite prepared to read anything, but when it came to writing, her early training reasserted itself. Love loomed large in Serena's romances and Serena's verse, but it was almost always love delicately restrained by a blue ribbon. When it wasn't, when vice and virtue were obliged to meet by exigencies of plot, Serena could never really bring herself to write in full any shocking word which could be expressed by asterisks or dash, and even so her characters were quite twenty years out of date in the nature of their strong language. The War, with its curious enrichment of the English man's and woman's vocabulary, might almost not have been. Serena's heroes, in moments of stress, damned and then apologised to her heroines. They courted their loves with elaborate delicacy, and asserted their modernity with archaic scraps of slang. All her heroines were very young and daring. They smoked and swallowed cocktails and sometimes went to night-clubs, but always they carried with them an air of uneasy bravado in so doing. To Peerly they were as painful as a superannuated actress in a 'bedroom scene,' and to listen to Serena's beautiful voice reading about them engendered a sensation of acute discomfort. At set times in Serena's well-ordered house one could indulge in whisky and soda, or wine, or cocktails, but the thirst engendered in her husband by a long course of her fiction was for beer and the conversation of Tommy Black, the ex-Service landlord of the 'Wayfarer's Rest' in the New Suburb.



Tommy was a good fellow, and though he had wedded a publican's daughter and now managed a public house he had also begun his friendship with Peerly at the same public school. The 'Wayfarer's Rest' was extremely well-conducted, and men of many types foregathered in Tommy's bar and smoking-room, but these facts were still beyond the comprehension of the now Honourable Serena. To her it was just a respectable 'pub' of the type at which one might lunch or even put up for the night during a motor-tour, but which, emphatically, was not a Gentleman's Club.

If Peerly wanted a Club in Sparrowfield, over and above the one whose stately portals he so seldom darkened in Town, what was the matter with the Sparrowfield Conservative Club? Peerly could have told her several things that were the matter with it, including the fact that none of its members appeared to take the slightest interest in politics, but that again was too troublesome to explain to Serena. So there began for Peerly a life arduously divided into water-tight compartments, within each of which in turn he consorted with different company which must not intermingle with the rest. During certain hours of the twenty-four he dwelt amid the queer creatures of Serena's inventive mind; for a larger portion with the members of Serena's outer world; and during such hours as he could filch for himself—hours which, alas, too seldom coincided with the requirements of the Public House Act—he usually sought out Tommy, and the crowd whose best stories he so often longed to pass on to Serena and so seldom dared to for fear she should want to know where he got them from. Those precious hours supported him through much, although, returning from them, he chewed cloves to remove the odour of honest beer.

There was, of course, nothing remarkably novel in this matrimonial situation. It was merely another instance of a common case which usually finds its solution in a working compromise of mutual disillusion or the Divorce Court. But there are always certain exceptions to this rule, which culminate either in positive crime or—rare, wonderful event!—in the genuine conversion of a pig's ear into a real silk purse. Nor are the agencies which produce such a miracle always those which an idealist would choose. In the case of 'Simon Rock' and the Honourable Peerly Graves the miracle-workers were those unconscious guardian-angels Tommy Black and Mr. Claud McCloud, assisted by the heavy hand of Scandal. Immensely astonished they and the scandalmongers of Sparrowfield would be if they knew how profoundly indebted to them for a divinity of

human happiness are Serena and Peerly Graves, who themselves, undiscerning of the fact, have sold 'St. Ives' to the prosperous auctioneer who now inhabits the house.

Mr. Claud McCloud dropped into the Graves' married life at a critical moment, about twelve months after the wedding, at which time it would have been entirely untrue to say that either Serena or her spouse was happy. Serena, blind in so many directions, was clear-eyed in others, and not entirely to be deceived by cloves or laborious attempts to remember details of yesterday evening's portion of *One Woman's Dream*. Pride forbade admission of the fact, but Serena knew, with the undignified anguish of a passion not as easily amenable to a ribbon-curb as Peerly imagined, that she was boring him terribly. His politeness betrayed him. She had never wholly deceived herself into believing that Peerly had married her out of love undiluted with a craving for ease; enough that he genuinely liked her. Once secured, Serena had planned to reveal to him such noble heights and depths of a woman's soul as must surely stir any man half willing to love, and so goad him (here perhaps we touch the very core of Serena's ambition) into attaining within himself full and worshipful manhood. Peerly, as first extracted from his humble position in the Bank, was lazy, but only, Serena believed, because he had not yet 'found himself,' and could not, except by sounding the depths of a good woman's love. Greatly Serena desired to do perpetual homage to a man who should be both mate and hero, but also she desired the joy of creating this demi-god herself out of the materials of a man imperfect, even as she created her romances out of unsorted emotions and scattered words. Once achieved, she was prepared to worship her own handiwork unstintingly. Unfortunately Serena's conception of what constituted a 'good woman' lacked agility and spice. It was static, delicate, dignified, and behold, when at last Peerly was hers and, shivering with dear anticipation, she unveiled the mysteries of her soul to the man of her choice, instead of kindling he was instantly, though most chivalrously, bored stiff. And what man was ever re-created by a woman who bored him? To one shred of comfort only Serena clung in her proudly-hidden humiliation, and that was the belief that a man who, bored, remained courteous and considerate to his wife inside the forced intimacy of marriage had a kind heart and was a gentleman. Upon these two qualities Serena concentrated avidly, and perhaps, therefore, it was some perverted instinct of worship which induced her to load them with

heavy burdens. One might not extol an ass as such, but at least one might admire his endurance, and if he maintained that endurance by sometimes feeding surreptitiously with his fellow-asses . . . why, even the Advice columns in the Sunday papers urged the wisdom of knowing when to wink and when to notice ; not that Serena ever sent them a query, but she read them and absorbed some of their instructions. So reasoned Serena with bitterness in her heart, and of that reasoning and bitterness and her irrepressible romanticism was born her novel *One Woman's Dream*, read with relentless irony to Peerly in complete certainty of his non-comprehension. There was pleasure, savage self-afflicting pleasure, in binding him with the chains of his own politeness and making him listen allegorically to her sufferings. As the tale proceeded Serena's style gained power unawares from her smouldering pain, so that when finally Mr. Claud McCloud, partner in the publishing firm of McCloud and McClelland, specialisers in popular fiction, read it on the recommendation of his senior reader, he agreed that it contained Possibilities.

'Author's a woman, of course,' he commented. 'The book's hopeless as it stands, but the stuff's there that goes with the average fair reader. Sex, sentiment, and just a hint of real subtlety. Wonder if she could be induced to reduce the sugar and increase the ginger?' He turned to his secretary. 'Take this down, Miss White.' . . .

Miss White took it down, and in due course posted it to 'Simon Rock.' Simon Rock opened it at next morning's breakfast-table, read it, and looked speculatively at Peerly Graves as he ate sausages restively and read the morning paper of Serena's choice. It was large, and many columns of it were devoted to serious articles and criticism of the Arts, and later in the day she knew that he would go out and purchase the cheap rag of his bachelor liberty.

'Mr. McCloud wants me to go up to Town to see him about my book,' she said at last, her voice quivering between tears and triumph. 'Will you ring him up for me and try to fix a time to-day? I'll go up early and spend the night with Sybil Price; she wants me to see "Thunder-Storm."'

Peerly pushed the paper-stand aside and smiled at his wife courteously. 'Good girl! Wish you luck!' he said, and resumed eating.

'Well!' said Serena sharply, after a moment of silence. 'Are you going to ring up his office for me, Peerly?'

'Eh?' said Peerly, startled out of a search for the Sporting Page. 'What, now? Oh, all right!' and he rose, dropping a regretful glance upon his cooling coffee. 'What's his number?'

Supplied with the number of Claud McCloud's telephone, he repaired to their own in the hall, and fixed 4 p.m. for the fateful interview. Then, prompted through the open breakfast-room door, he rang up Mrs. Sybil Price; and the Secretary of the Sparrowfield Hospital about a date for the next Concert; and the Secretary of the Recreation Committee at the Chocolate Factory concerning next week's Select Dance; and the Secretary of the Local Operatic Society about music sheets. This done, he returned to the table where he found that Serena had rung for fresh coffee and uncongealed sausages for his benefit. These having been consumed in unworthy haste, he followed her to the library and assisted with a mass of correspondence which must be attended to before she left for Town, since Serena, though in constant correspondence with other people's Secretaries, kept none of her own. Peerly the late Bank clerk was rapidly assuming that rôle, and, watching him at work, the woman thought, unhappily, 'Thunder-Storm' would only bore him, and so would Sybil, or I'd ask him to come along too. I'm almost sorry that I let him leave the Bank to work for me—only there wasn't any more need for him to stop there for a salary, and so many clerks are out of work.'

Serena had a just mind over the problems of unemployment.

After an early luncheon she departed cheerfully for Town and her encounter with a Guardian Angel unawares, leaving the patient Peerly still at the large roll-top desk in the library.

Not until past six o'clock that evening did Peerly Graves properly grasp the fact that for to-night he was a virtual bachelor, with a hard day's work accomplished and no literary demands upon his evening hours. He had just finished disentangling the Operatic Society's curiously muddled accounts when he realised that he need not, to-night, trouble to dress for dinner or indeed remain at home for dinner at all. He could close the door of 'St. Ives' behind him with a free mind and walk boldly across the border into the New Suburb and the 'Wayfarer's Rest,' and dine with old Tommy and linger with Tommy's friends until closing time ejected them all, with both hands warmed before the fire of life; and then he could come home and go to bed and chuck that damned eiderdown on to the floor and wind about him a cosy cocoon of blanket without

raising sleepy protest from the other side of the bed. The very thought was rest. He arose, filed away the Operatic Accounts carefully, pulled down the smooth-running lid of the desk, and passed out whistling gaily through a hall ever-redolent of furniture polish and a front door simpering with green paint and the self-conscious New Art decorations of the early 1900's, into a dusky November evening, filled with faint moaning promise of a storm, beneath a sky banked with slit clouds through which gleamed an under-glow of dying gold.

Away over the border, where a great new road swept northward through Sparrowfield, glowed an illuminated sign all about beer; beer, the drink which is as much a symbol as a beverage. At the twinkling invitation of those golden eyes Peerly Graves set forth light-heartedly without his latch-key, and without informing Banks the butler of his intended absence for dinner or of his destination. Like a dog loosed from a lead he just went.

Within the 'Wayfarer's Rest' that evening were many lights, the sound of a wireless orchestra alternating with a gramophone, and all preparations for one of Tommy's Wednesday Evening Hops. In Sparrowfield Wednesday is Early Closing day, and therefore a festive night for a large section of the community which on Saturday is still serving the exigencies of late shoppers until nine o'clock and is then too tired to dance. On Wednesdays a considerate Town Council permits Tommy Black to organise dances of an informal character until eleven-thirty, provided that they are conducted on a basis of ginger-beer and lemonade after the stroke of ten. He greeted Peerly with pleasure.

'We haven't seen you for a fortnight, old man,' he complained. 'What have you been up to?'

'Keeping the accounts and so on for every damned Charitable Committee in Sparrowfield,' replied Peerly succinctly, 'and helping to run Amusements and Entertainments at three infernal Bazaars.' He surveyed the surrounding festive preparations with disfavour. 'I forgot you'd have this crowd in to-night, Tommy,' he continued, 'and I was looking forward to a snug meal with you and the Missus, and so on, but now you'll be playing Mrs. Grundy with a licence to sell intoxicants half the evening.'

Mrs. Peerly, plump and fair in a black evening dress, laughed.

'I'm so sorry, Peerly,' she said, 'but we'll all have to dine with the crowd in the public dining-room. The decorators are at work

in ours. Why not join the fun and dance to-night? I hear you've been dancing quite a lot recently.'

'All in the noble cause of Charity,' said Peerly sadly. 'When I come to your house I always expect to sit still in the smoking-room and enjoy myself.'

'Well, of course you still can to-night, after dinner,' said Mrs. Tommy kindly, 'only most of the boys won't be there. They keep away on Wednesdays, the ones who don't like dancing.'

'Gott strafe all gramophones!' said Peerly feverishly, as somebody switched off the loud speaker and a noisy record began to revolve. 'Tommy, I'm going to get drunk to-night if ever, just to forget that noise. It's as clear in the smoking-room and the bar as it is here. It's unmelodious Hades.'

'You mustn't get drunk,' said Mrs. Tommy seriously. 'You must dance. That'll make it easier to bear.'

'I'll think about it,' said Peerly. 'It's a terrible alternative.'

Nevertheless he had resolved not to dance until he found himself seated at dinner beside the little Cockney with dark eyes.

The little Cockney was very refreshing. She had the most perfect accent of her kind that Peerly had ever encountered and the naivest manner; a trim small figure dressed in something crimson and silky and fluffy, and a natural refinement delicious to contemplate. She said little, but her small feet danced with a dexterity which told of much practice and which somehow induced equal dexterity in a dancing-partner. Technically she appeared to have one with her, for she was brought to the door by a young-middle-aged man with plastered hair and his face queerly bisected by a hard white nose, the rigid bone of which seemed to stretch the skin across it to the utmost. He drove a large car, but he was introduced to Peerly under the vague name of 'my brother Eddy,' which disposed of him for dancing purposes. Indeed, throughout dinner and onwards he seemed to concentrate his energies chiefly upon absorbing as many unobtrusive drinks as possible before ten o'clock struck, although he remained silently abnormally sober during the process.

Now Peerly Graves had dissipated a good deal of time and some money during his ante-War pre-marriage career, without being actually a dissipated young man. He had experimented in excess from time to time and gathered from it disillusion, so that normally he preferred the society of men to women and the consumption of honest beer in moderation to spirits. A reasonable glow and a good



story told amid wreathed tobacco-smoke sufficed him. But to-night he was the prey of self-pity and a conscience which reproached him in muffled tones for he knew not precisely what. He was seized with a fervent desire for a really roseate world, speed, and a *confidante* passive but attentive, to whom he could pour out the troubles of his soul; and when, at some ill-defined period of an evening already flushed with pink, Tommy loomed out of a charming opalescence, propelled him very gently out of the door, and advised him to go home, he experienced a sense of grievance almost beyond expression. Turning about on the threshold of the 'Wayfarer's Rest' with every intention of re-entering he encountered the solemn Eddy, accompanied by Dark Eyes, and then it seemed entirely natural that Dark Eyes should tuck her arm into his and that they should be inside the limousine together, with no light on inside it, and Brother Eddy driving them at high speed, assisted by a roaring wind behind the car, while trees waved crazy arms against the lighter darkness of the sky, and Dark Eyes allowed a suddenly tired man to hold her soft hand and remained utterly and beautifully silent while he told her the troubles of his life.

And who should know if the mind of Dark Eyes occupied itself with mental arithmetic or some anxiety about the way 'Eddy' was driving?

The momentous interview with Claud McCloud and 'Simon Rock' took place punctually at four o'clock, and lasted ten minutes which, to the anguished author of *One Woman's Dream*, might have been ten years of subtle torture. Mr. McCloud was very courteous, very much interested in the work of 'Simon Rock'. In the first flush of the meeting Serena's heart beat jubilantly, then, inch by inch, there fell upon it chill and shadow.

The most delicate bits, the most exalted moments of her work, found scant favour. Something, said Mr. McCloud, a 'trifle more human,' even a 'little bit saucy,' must be edited in before the firm of McCloud and McClelland would undertake the publication of an otherwise quite promising first novel. He put it with great tact, but still, people, implied Mr. McCloud, even women (who formed the largest proportion of novel-readers), no longer cared for purely saccharine Romance. Mrs. Graves had treated her theme rather too timidly. If she would underline and emphasise it a trifle and change its ending all would be well. 'You are writing under a pen-name, Mrs. Graves,' said Claud McCloud kindly, 'so why not

let yourself go? Forget that you are Serena Graves and be only 'Simon Rock' when you write. Don't be afraid of primeval things, but don't, *don't* fall into the snare of the Strong Silent Man and all that. No doubt his turn will come round again in the usual cycle presently, but he's out of date for the present.'

Serena breathed hard. Anger shook her like a leaf, the blind anger of pain. 'Let yourself go!' Why, she *had*! Her book was the very outcry of her heart! Couldn't the crass man realise that? Then indeed her art had failed her! She had analysed herself and dissected her emotions in vain. Why . . . why . . . in those pages she had almost verged on the indecent in her analysis of passion! Lilian was the most vivid character she could ever create, Lilian was *herself*. That was why it had been almost terrible to submit Lilian to the alien eyes of a publisher. But at least she had anticipated that the truth of her picture would be realised and only a few technicalities criticised. This was a casting of pearls before swine. She rose to her feet, flying the flag of her wrath.

'I'm sorry, Mr. McCloud,' she said crushingly, 'but I'm afraid that I haven't a . . . *saucy* . . . mind.'

Providence had arranged that day that Claud McCloud should eat an indigestible lunch. He was, therefore, in no mood to parley long with a fool whose work, at best, could be no better than that of a dozen of his moderately-successful authors. He rose also, and replied brusquely.

'Mrs. Graves,' he said, 'for writing successful fiction it is necessary to acquire a working knowledge of other minds than one's own. Forgive me if I offend you in saying that.'

'Not at all,' said Serena sarcastically, clasping her manuscript. 'You merely enlighten me,' and she took her leave with an interchange of strained courtesies.

Dinner with Sybil Price and stalls for 'Thunder-Storm' did not ease the dismay and dislocation of her spirit. *She*, Serena Ross of Ross's Chocolates, after devoting most of her time since her school-days to social science and nearly every sort of Welfare movement in Sparrowfield, had been directed to 'acquire a working knowledge' of other minds than her own! What else had she been doing, always? Alone at last in bed the walls of her pride crumbled grudgingly. *Had* she been egocentric after all? Was that why Peery always turned to her beneath his good-humoured manner and his sometimes fervent kisses a mind impenetrable as a glass globe? Why wouldn't he come out to her, *tell* her things? Why

did he sit so silent when she read to him? Was there anywhere another woman—say the wife of that friend of his at the 'Wayfarer's Rest'—who could make him expand and speak? Was there anything in Peerly, or had she draped a dummy with false glamour?

Here Serena's thoughts became chaotic, bitter, and generally unbearable. She turned on the light by her bed and strove to read. A tiny bedroom clock tinkled the hour of 2 a.m. and between the print of the book which she held and the eye of her mind there seemed to hang a vision of Peerly fleeting, fleeting away into an outer darkness unknown, dwindling, gone; a lost soul roaming the fringes of the world, neither understood nor understanding, a lost Peerly, desolate to her heart as a lost child and as little comprehended. Serena switched off the light again, and yielded herself to tears, and as soon as might be after breakfast she sped back to Sparrowfield.

At the front gate she noticed absent-mindedly how sadly last night's gale had ravaged her chrysanthemums. In the hall, dumping her suitcase after her own independent fashion, she met the shock of doom. Mr. Graves, said Banks, had not come home last night. Had he not joined her in Town? He, Banks, had not seen the Master before he went out last evening, and he had not telephoned. Should he, Banks, ring up a few of the Master's friends . . .

Serena cut him short, her heart sick within her. She would do that herself; something *must* have happened. She sent Banks away and tremblingly called up a few names and finally, after a moment's hesitation, Mr. Black of the 'Wayfarer's Rest.'

What? Yes, Mrs. Graves speaking . . . Mr. Graves . . . has he been . . .? What! Left at ten o'clock last night! Who with? Tommy Black only knew that he had left then, in fact Mr. Black had said good-night to him and then returned to attend to other guests. Mr. Graves had been all right. He would enquire if anyone else had seen him.

A pause. No one *had* seen him after he left the dance. It had been a dark night and windy. But the Blacks would make further enquiries and ring up Mrs. Graves again in a few minutes. Serena replaced the receiver with a hand that fumbled, and sat waiting, staring before her with blank eyes. Oh Peerly, fleeing, fleeing away in the black dreams of the night!

The telephone bell recalled her, but the voice addressing her was not that of Mr. Black. Feverishly she established her identity to the unknown speaker. Yes, the Honourable Mrs. Graves. Who

was speaking? House Surgeon at *where*? The Infirmary at *Collingborough*, Collingborough thirty miles north? Mr. Graves hurt in motor accident? Oh God! Serious, said the surgeon quietly, but not half so bad as it might have been. There had been nothing in the shape of a card or letter on him when he was brought in unconscious by the Ambulance, so the Hospital people could only go by the name on his linen. They had been ringing up many other Graveses, and all the wrong ones. Yes; would Mrs. Graves come at once? But she need not be too frightened. There was no immediate danger, only he must not be moved.

A few minutes later and Serena's own car was breaking the speed limit. Behind her chauffeur Serena sat deliberately suspending thought.

The Honourable Peerly Graves emerged from something which seemed to have been sleep and became conscious of backache, of headache, dull but uneasy. The car appeared to have stopped, but it was still dark. His trilby hat must have slipped down over his eyes, but really he was too tired to push it up. Besides, he was still holding a soft feminine hand. What had he just been saying to Dark Eyes? Oh yes! Once again his body became non-existent except for the hand that held hers, the cheek that touched her silken sleeve. He was just a Mind, talking. And Dark Eyes was just a Mind, listening. He resumed at the point where, for some unknown reason, he had paused.

'Y'see,' said Peerly Graves, 'I don't think I was born a dud. Understand? Only I was number thirteen . . . unlucky number. Unusually large family nowadays, what? And from the first everyone blinking well kept on rubbing in the fact that I'm the family wash-out. No particular bent, y'know. 'Varsity out of the question, so which was it to be, farm-hand in Canada or clerk at home? Hadn't decided when the War came along, and even then it wasn't Peerly for the Staff. Nothin' cushy doin' for Peerly. Y'see, there was the Provo.-Marshal I beat up in Calais, and other episodes—' He paused, chuckling faintly. 'I never was any good at ordering other fellows about. Lieutenant the Honourable Peerly Graves, N.B.G., but of course the youngest son of the late Lord Hummock.

'Captain The Honourable Peerly Graves, still N.B.G., but of course still the youngest surviving son of the late Lord Hummock. Crawled out of a trench on Armistice Day and was told by his devoted family that now the War was over of course he meant to

do a little *work*. My God, what did they think I'd been doing while old Peter'd been covering his manly chest with decorations at the base? Oh, not his fault, his luck! Same with Timothy, who got a nice little wooden cross all to himself at Ypres. He wanted it, y'know. Life was a sucked egg to Timothy. But my people are all like that; they know what they want and go for it and get it. Damned if I've ever known what I did want, so I've never got it, eh—?'

He paused again. Dark Eyes didn't seem to be very talkative, but her soft hand conveyed comprehension. He felt weak, and his spirit floated relaxed on the tide of his own words, which flowed on in a low unhurried meditative monotone.

'Thought I knew what I wanted last year. Anything to get out of that Bank before I lammed the pious Partridge over the head with a ledger, only the Big Open Spaces, where Men are Men, are cold, y'know, So I married Ross's Chocolates, and what's the result? I've been book-keeper for every Charity Committee in Sparrowfield ever since, working like hell! Serve me right. Shouldn't have played up for a soft thing, should I? Having done it I can't jib. Must have some self-respect, what? She's damn holy, and full of beautiful ideas about little Peerly, and I can't tell her a blessed thing. She's like a kid, and I never could hurt a kid. Thinks she's the epitome of human wisdom and imagines that life's like a serial story in a Parish Magazine. And yet she's not a fool, and she gets her way with the Committees and never notices when a cat spits. Doesn't choose to, and doesn't spit herself. Interesting woman. I'd like to smack her head. Wonder if I ever shall? . . . Gad, aren't her arms pretty! If only she wouldn't talk and write that mush. . . . Can't have everything. She might have been all angles, eh? But the *ignorance* of the woman! Talks three languages, Dark Eyes, and talks rot in all three. Wonderful!'

Another pause. That curious detached body of his had begun to hurt clamorously somewhere, and the fact occupied his attention for some minutes as a surprising phenomenon, although he was unaware that he groaned heavily in response. The hand in his quivered as his fingers bit into its delicate flesh. Then once again he floated anchored and at ease.

'Yes,' he said, with weighty solemnity, 'she's a wonderful woman. Wonderful. I don't know what to do with her. Tell you what, I'd rather like to go away and do something or other successful and come back on an equal footing and tell her a few things. You can't decently criticise when you're the under dog,

can you ? But I'd come back. I'm not eloping with you, Dark Eyes ; just joy-riding, understand ? Joy-riding, and talking, you little blessing. Quite sure you like it ? That's a good little girl ! There's something about the wonderful Serena that I'd be sorry to leave, only I'd enjoy it better on an independent income. It'll have to be the Big Open Spaces after all, I'm afraid, Dark Eyes. Can't speculate without capital, and clerking's lost its charm. What the devil shall I do to make money in the Big Open Spaces, eh ? that's the problem.' His voice faded, to reawaken on a note of fear.

'Don't take your hand away ! . . . Here, what's happened ? Who's hurt ? Let go, you little shrieking fool, you're only shaken and your brother's under the car ! Damn you, let go, it's burning. I must get at him, poor devil ! Don't hamper me so, I tell you he's *burning* ! God ! I say, Dark Eyes, you're not . . . *Dead* ?'

The voice that answered him was close to his ear, soft and full as the opening of a rose-petal ; not the voice of the little dark-eyed Cockney.

'She's asleep,' it said. 'I'm here ; your fool Serena.'

The Honourable Mrs. Peerly Graves was never quite sure whether or not her husband murmured 'Damn !' again before he relapsed into unconsciousness, but really it didn't matter. It was only one more pebble thrown into the wreckage of her heart.

The scandal in Sparrowfield would of course have been considerably less if the car which 'Brother Eddy' had driven into a stone wall at forty miles an hour had been his own, and if Dark Eyes had really been his sister. As it happened he had picked up both absent-mindedly, and there was some delay in discovering relatives of either party for the purpose of identifying the bodies. Under the circumstances it was just as well that Peerly Graves could prove that he had never known their names and had gone a-joy-riding in simple innocence of heart.

All the same it was not to be expected that the Amusement Council and the Operatic Society or even the Hospital Guild should welcome him back upon their respective Committees with any enthusiasm, nor did he give them the opportunity. Serena sold out her share in Ross's Chocolates and bought a fruit-farm somewhere out in the Great Open Spaces ; and the curious thing is that Peerly is making a success of it. Also that they are ideally happy together.

Quite why nobody has ever been able to find out.



## HOURS IN UNDRESS.

## IV. SCIENCE AND RELIGION: THE NEW PHASE.

THE names recall old contraries and a bitter controversy. It is natural to turn with expectancy to the new book on *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems*, described by the Dean of St. Paul's, the most eminent publicist on the religious side, as probably his 'last considerable work.' His topic invites a hope of fresh light on the ancient problem, and the occasion is appropriate to a conciliatory solution.

Very regretfully, we register disappointment. Though a section of Chapter V is devoted to 'The Age of Science,' little or no advance is made towards its peace with the Churches. The essential passage is on page 208:

'The greatly extended horizon which Science has opened for the human race, in place of the "Come, O Lord," of the first-century Christians, has supplied an idealistic element even for modern secularism. When purged from its superstitious and apocalyptic accessories, it may restore for us some of the enthusiasm with which the early Christians awaited the coming of Christ. It would not be fanciful to find some analogy between the joyous trust of Christ in the Father of heaven who makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and without whom no sparrow falls to the ground, and the reverent spirit in which the man of science accepts whatever facts his studies reveal to him, confident that "the universe is friendly" to him who devotes himself without reserve to the discovery of truth.'

But even if this analogy were complete, and were as convincing as it is fanciful, it would not bring us very far. The argument still rests on assumptions and proceeds by hypotheses. 'Science,' says Dr. Inge on page 206, 'is positive enough in rejecting indignantly much that has been believed about God.' But 'science,' as such, is unemotional, and 'indignantly' is hypothetical. Men of science reject beliefs, or, more commonly, ignore them, but they are indignant in their personal capacity. 'The scientific objection,' wrote Sir Arthur Eddington a year before Dr. Inge, 'is not merely to particular creeds which assert in outworn phraseology beliefs which are either no longer held or no longer convey inspiration

to life. The spirit of seeking which animates us refuses to regard any kind of creed as its goal.' <sup>1</sup> Is it the *kind* of creed which restrains Dr. Inge from a bolder overture to Science? He writes on page 207:

'False, not to say blasphemous, beliefs about the character of God and His dealings with men, have been responsible for a large proportion of the crimes and frauds which have stained the history of the Church, and for the rejection of the Christianity in which they were brought up by many high-minded men and women. . . . Europe is still plagued with priestly frauds, imaginary cures, and superstitions of every kind. But Science has laid the axe to the root of the tree, and we may hope that by degrees all such beliefs and half-beliefs will be either discredited or placed on a scientific basis.'

Surely, there is a confusion here. Science neither disputes with Religion, nor consciously enters into alliance with it. Dr. Inge represents *his* Church as joining hands with a very subjective Science in overthrowing the stronghold of the Church of Rome. But we do not read history in this way. False beliefs may certainly have caused frauds, and such books as Lyell's *Geology* and Darwin's *Origin of Species* were partly responsible for Sir Edmund Gosse's vision of 'the artificial edifice of extravagant faith beginning to totter and crumble,' and for Hardy's execration in *Tess* of 'the last grotesque phase of a creed which had served mankind well in its time.' But while this 'faith' and 'creed' was of native growth, men of science had enough to do in finding their own path without going out of their way to sweep the churchmen's; and, as to 'false, not to say blasphemous, beliefs,' would they not simply reply: 'Instead of "false" we speak of "undemonstrable," and "blasphemous" is not in our vocabulary'? 'The Church of Rome,' we read on page 189, 'cannot escape from the medievalism which holds it in bondage.' It may have derived prestige from 'the adhesion of a few accomplished men of letters,' who, like Dr. Inge in his own Church, have 'placed at its service the trained skill of eloquent advocates. But meanwhile,' he adds, 'Science, now wholly emancipated, goes on its own way, and gradually creates a mental atmosphere which excludes the whole world-view of Catholicism.' Yet why only of Catholicism? Would not Science, thus personified, be indifferent to a division of religious forces? Can it make peace with Religion while the Churches are divided

<sup>1</sup> *Religion and the Unseen World*. London, 1920.

among themselves, and is not that division itself the last inescapable medievalism?

We turn back from Dr. Inge to the writer of an earlier book on the relations of religion to thought outside. Not long after the vehement eighteen-sixties, 'the most famous and influential of mid-Victorian critics,' as Professor Boas justly designates <sup>1</sup> Matthew Arnold, tried to calm the troubled waters by explaining in *Literature and Dogma*, a small portion of which was published in this magazine, that—

'The language of the Bible is literary, not scientific language; language *thrown out* at an object of consciousness not fully grasped, which inspired emotion. Evidently <sup>2</sup> [he assumed a generation ready to believe the best], 'if the object be one not fully to be grasped, and one to inspire emotion, the language of figure and feeling will satisfy us better about it, will cover more of what we seek to express, than the language of literal fact and science. The language of science about it will be *below* what we feel to be the truth.'

It sounded hopeful and even likely, and it was recommended by the plausible italics in which Arnold loved to drape a halting thought. But the fabric in this instance was too thin. It did not cover the monkey in the tree, which caused so much perturbation to men of feeling. This submission that the language of science was 'below what we feel to be the truth' was not ultimately more permanent than Tennyson's declaration in *In Memoriam* that he 'would not stay' if Science tried to 'prove we are' what he felt that he was not born to be. Both solutions were temporary in the sense of Dr. Wingfield-Stratford's criticism of the Victorians, whose object was

'to patch up a compromise that might at any rate last out their time. They deliberately avoided any vital or drastic solution.'<sup>2</sup>

And, meanwhile, Science went on.

It went on to a stage when it began again, and when its language approximated more closely to that said to be suitable to objects not fully to be grasped. This statement needs explanation, and, happily, it takes us away from polemical courses. May we rely, first, on Sir James Jeans? In his little book, *Eos*, he tells us that 'our whole knowledge of the really fundamental physical conditions

<sup>1</sup> In *The Eighteen-Seventies*. By Fellows of the Royal Society of Literature. Cambridge, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> *The Victorian Tragedy*, p. 285. London, 1930.

of the universe in which we live is a growth of the last quarter of a century.' A big saying, surely, emphasising his warning to 'the need for caution in our interpretation of the universe,' and in the language of the interpreters:

'The new world [Jeans continues] in which astronomy moves to-day is all a discovery of the present century. It is not merely that our present concepts of the extent of the universe in space and of its duration in time are new revelations to us; our understanding of its fundamental mechanism is equally new. The conversion of matter into radiation, which appears to be the primary physical process of the universe, did not come within our terrestrial purview at all until 1904'—

the first year of the quarter century above.

Now, accepting this statement, as we are bound, and even eager, to do, does not all that stale, dreary, bitter controversy disappear into the limbo of Victorian error—however conscientious, yet erroneous? Arnold's compromise and Tennyson's revolt, the poet who spoke another language and the poet who struck his camp, are alike foolish in the eyes of poet-scientists in the twentieth century, who travel on one road to truth. For the difference of approach disappears with the controversy it engendered. 'The belief is not that all the knowledge of the universe that we hold so enthusiastically will survive in the letter,' says Sir Arthur Eddington, 'but a sureness that we are on the road'; and, so saying, he demolishes the certainties of 'literal fact and science.' 'If our so-called facts are changing shadows,' he goes on, 'they are shadows cast by the light of constant truth,' and, so saying, he comes much nearer to the method of 'figure and feeling.' 'In religion, we are repelled,' he adds, 'by that confident theological doctrine which has settled for all generations just how the spiritual world is worked,' and, so saying, the language of science becomes as 'literary' as 'the language of the Bible.'

There is a convention which endures that 'imaginative literature is nearer akin to religion than to science.' This brief expression of it is taken from a passage to which we shall come back in Mr. G. N. Clark's admirable monograph on *The Seventeenth Century*.<sup>1</sup> But it has often been said before him; it lay at the root of the language-compromise in *Literature and Dogma*; and it is said again in his new book by Dr. Inge: 'The natural language of devotion

<sup>1</sup> Oxford, 1929.

is poetry, not science.' But is it? or rather, will it be? Upon the answer to this question depends in large measure the prospect of a reconciliation between science and faith. Poetry, not science, they repeat; imaginative literature nearer to religion than to science; and then, on the top of this age-long assertion of the poets' monopoly in devotion and imagination, comes the spray from the fountain of science in the writings of Eddington and Jeans. It sounds almost too new to be true, and yet their authority is indefeasible. Everywhere we have to revise our values, to call in old coin as trite, and to accustom ourselves to new currency. Take, for instance, and at random almost, a sentence from a recent book on *Goethe*, the poet-scientist of an older dispensation, by a well-known writer on German literature.<sup>1</sup> He speaks of

'the two great fields of intellectual activity, science and poetry, which the nineteenth century, with its enormous strides in scientific discovery, was to separate by an unbridgeable gulf and an irreconcilable antagonism.'

This was a commonplace a year or two ago, but to-day, amid the changing shadows cast by the constant light of truth, it has no present validity. The professor should have stopped at the word 'separate,' for, though the gulf, and, perhaps, the antagonism remain, a bridge is being built before our eyes and Science moves with healing on her lips.

We might multiply these surprises. We might even compare the present phase with that moment of poise in Alexandria, when Philo enlarged Hebraism by Hellenism, or to that later moment of Philo's re-birth in Florence, when Pico della Mirandola sought to reconcile Plato with Jesus. More immediate to our theme, however, is the work of our own Philo-Pico, Robert Bridges, whose poetry was not separated from science by an unbridgeable gulf, despite the activities of the nineteenth century, and whose contribution to imaginative literature was akin both to science and to religion. He had the advantage, as we have said before,<sup>2</sup> of growing up in the era of Darwinism and of studying biology under the sign of evolution. So the shock, which half-amused Robert Browning (born in 1812)—

'Here gape I, all agog,  
These thirty years to learn how tadpole turns to frog,'

<sup>1</sup> Professor J. G. Robertson, in *Goethe* ('The Republic of Letters' series), London, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE, May, 1930.

but which could not shake his fundamental beliefs, was accepted by Bridges (born in 1844) as part of the normal course of things, in his text-books, in the hospitals, and in medical practice. He missed, what Tennyson felt so keenly, and what Mr. Clark, in the book which we have mentioned, discovers latent in Milton—the sense of a loss to poetry, and of a contraction of the *materia poetica*, by the ‘enormous strides of scientific discovery.’ He was content to give Science her place, without attempting to reclaim her conquered territory for the exclusive use of the poets, as anointed priests in the temple of imagination.

This, too, requires explanation, and it takes us still further away from polemical courses. It is familiar ground that Milton, in 1638, visiting Galileo in Italy, found him ‘a prisoner to the Inquisition for thinking in Astronomy other than the Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought.’ Yet Milton, thirty years after thinking in astronomy in his turn, still wrote in Ptolemaic figures. Why was this?

‘It was not [says Mr. Clark<sup>1</sup>] that Milton could not understand the arguments, or that he had objections to lodge against them. What moved him was the need to admire, and the need therefore to retain the inscrutability of the universe.’

Therefore, ‘both as an artist and as a man of religion,’ he deliberately preferred to keep poetry free from science. Tennyson, whose understanding of the arguments adduced by the science of his day was attested by Huxley and the Royal Society, was subject to a similar inhibition. He, too, was jealous of what seemed an encroachment by science on the territory of what Arnold distinguished as the imaginative reason. He, too, guarded the strangeness of the universe, and there was more of the artist than of the man of religion in his verses ‘By an Evolutionist’ in 1888:

‘If my body comes from brutes, tho’ somewhat finer than their  
own,

I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the royal voice be  
mute?

No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the throne,  
Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and rule thy Province of the  
brute.’

This fear of expropriation was common to Tennyson and Milton, each of whom lived in an age when the positive, the material and

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 342.



the rational seemed to threaten his preserves as a poet. Each of them welcomed the new knowledge—Milton, by speech and action, in *Areopagitica* and elsewhere, and Tennyson in many passages, as confident as they were clear :

‘Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail  
Against her beauty? May she mix  
With men and prosper! Who shall fix  
Her pillars? Let her work prevail!’

But each was resolute to limit her to her proper scientific sphere. Her beauty was not beauty for them. ‘The rest,’ said Raphael to Adam,

‘From Man or Angel the great Architect  
Did wisely to conceal, and not divulge  
His secrets, to be scanned by those who ought  
Rather admire. . . . Heaven is for thee too high  
To know what passes there. Be lowly wise.’<sup>1</sup>

And so, too, Tennyson said of human knowledge :

‘Let her know her place;  
She is the second, not the first . . .  
For she is earthly of the mind,  
But Wisdom heavenly of the soul.’

It is these distinctions which we are now taught to forget. For to science no less than to faith the universe is inscrutable again. The revelation of its secrets illumines the one with the same light as the other, and its strangeness, meanwhile, is the equal care of both.

‘The observed sizes of the stars [writes Jeans] proclaim the secret of the structure of the atom. . . . The infinitely great is never very far from the infinitely small in science. . . . Let us reflect that our earth is one millionth part of one such grain of sand, and our mundane affairs, our troubles and our achievements, begin to appear in their correct proportion to the universe as a whole.’

‘Mind’ and ‘soul’ meet in this synthesis; ‘Knowledge’ and ‘Wisdom’ kiss one another. Poetry need not be jealous of science, nor apprehend either a diminishment of its province, or a shortening of its faculty of admiration. ‘So may we read,’ says George Meredith of the stars observed by the astronomer,

<sup>1</sup> *Paradise Lost*, viii, 71 and 173.

'and little find them cold :  
 Let it but be the lord of Mind to guide  
 Our eyes ; no branch of Reason's growing lopped ;  
 Nor dreaming on a dream ; but fortified  
 By day to penetrate black midnight ; see  
 Hear, feel, outside the senses ; even that we,  
 The specks of dust upon a mound of mould,  
 We who reflect those rays, though low our place,  
 To them are lastingly allied.'

The divided realms are re-united. The 'unbridgeable gulf' finds its engineer. The separatist tendency of the nineteenth century is vanquished, and, instead of the compromise by two languages, science speaks with the tongue of poets and poetry with that of men of science.

'The Ring in its repose is Unity and Being :  
 Causation and Existence are the motion thereof.  
 Throughout all runneth Deity, and the conscience of it  
 Is that creative faculty of animal mind  
 That, wakening to self-conscience of all Essences,  
 Closeth the full circle, where the spirit of man,  
 Escaping from the bondage of physical Law,  
 Re-entereth eternity by the vision of God.'

And, though we must accept the warning in the next verse of *The Testament of Beauty*,

'This absolution of Reason is not for all to see,'

yet we accept the fact that it is visible, with 'the lord of Mind to guide,' when 'the spirit of man, escaping from the bondage of physical law,' learns to 'see, hear, feel, outside the senses.'<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit of Man*, we remember, was the name chosen by Dr. Bridges for his anthology in 1915 from the philosophers and poets, whose evidence he collected for his proposition, that 'man is a spiritual being, and the proper work of his mind is to interpret the world according to his higher nature.' So the language of science about it is not below what we feel to be truth, and poets may be consoled by the repaired mystery of the universe for the threatened loss of their terrain. For 'the new knowledge', we read again,

<sup>1</sup> Compare,

'So write a book shall mean beyond the facts,  
 Suffice the eye, and save the soul beside.'

—R. Browning. *The Ring and the Book*, xii, 866-7.

But we must not make metaphysicians of our poets. Dr. Mackail warns us against this in his new edition of the *Æneid*, to which I hope to return next month.

'compels us to revise our hasty first impressions that we had stumbled into a universe which either did not concern itself with life or was actively hostile to life' ['Not distant aliens, nor senseless Powers'].

This, we take it, is the high argument of *Man and his Universe*, by Mr. John Langdon-Davies, or, at any rate, it is close to his bold conclusions. 'Who,' he asks,

'can dare to pretend that science has destroyed the splendour of the heavens, or the glory of the universe? The truth is that nobody has yet been able to imagine a God splendid enough or glorious enough, aesthetically or ethically, to capture the imagination of man, once it has become alive to what modern science can show it lying about its feet or hanging overhead. . . . And since, where man finds the greatest beauty, there will his reverence be, the modern man worships the human intellect which has drawn a picture of the universe infinitely more beautiful than any system of theology has disclosed.'

There are faults in this pæan: the human intellect is not an object of worship, but the beauty which that intellect reveals, and the picture of the universe which it is drawing is still, of course, incomplete. Yet the root of the matter is there, and Mr. Langdon-Davies gets closer down to it when he adds, that what is wanted next is the new poetry to humanise the new knowledge:

'Science without art can do nothing against vulgarity. . . . All that has ever separated us from the cats on the garden wall has been the words of the Shakespeares, Donnes, Shelleys, Brownings, who have covered the animal core with imaginative dreams. In so doing they have had to use what science had to give them; and now science gives them more than ever by taking away fear'—

not least, as we have found cause to see, the fear of their own expropriation.

Of the Lambeth Conference last summer, public notice was chiefly fastened on the Bishops' resolutions with reference to sex. One of those, the famous fifteenth, to which the votes *pro* and *con* were appended, seemed almost subversive of conventional morality, a fact which would not alarm Mr. Langdon-Davies. But to us, marking the change in what Professor Whitehead calls our mental climate, and, perhaps, to the Buckle of the present century, inditing the history of its civilisation, the interest of that

series of resolutions is surpassed by Nos. 3 and 7, with the relevant portion of the Encyclical Letter. There we read, that

‘There is much in the scientific and philosophical thinking of our time which provides a climate more favourable to faith in God than has existed for generations. New interpretations of the cosmic process are now before us which are congruous with Christian Theism. The great scientific movement of the nineteenth century had the appearance, at least, of hostility to religion. But, now, from within that movement and under its impulse, views of the universal process are being formed which point to a spiritual interpretation. We are now able, by the help of the various departmental sciences, to trace in outline a continuous process of creative development in which at every stage we can find the Divine presence and power. Thus scientific thinking and discovery seem to be giving us back the sense of reverence and awe before the sublimity of a Creator, Who is not only the cause and ground of the universe, but always and everywhere active within it.’

We need not dilate on this paragraph, with its ample promise of a resolve ‘to consider whether current ideas of God Himself are adequate to the new revelation of His creative activity,’—in other words, if we read these words aright, not whether the language of science is below what we feel to be religious truth, but whether the language of religion is below the truth revealed by science. This inquiry, so contrary to last century’s, might be extended in many directions, not in that of physical science only. History, anthropology, ethnology,<sup>1</sup> physiology, even literary criticism, are all involved in it: ‘the modern man’s Bible,’ says Mr. Langdon-Davies, ‘has its own commandments, “be tolerant” among them’; and it is reassuring to read in resolution 7 of the Lambeth Conference:

‘As the intellectual meaning and content of the Christian doctrine of God cannot be fully apprehended without the aid of the highest human knowledge, it is essential that Christian theology should be studied and taught in Universities in contact with philosophy, science, and criticism.’

This pious aspiration contains all prayer. The answer to it who can foretell?

LAURIE MAGNUS.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. C. F. Andrews, writing from India to the October *Hibbert Journal*, raises the issue on the topic of racial equality, and complains that, ‘with regard to these grave concerns, the Churches in this country appear as yet to give only a very timid and uncertain moral guidance.’

## LITERARY ACROSTICS.

A LITERARY Acrostic is published every month, and the Editor of THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE offers two prizes to the most successful solvers. The winners will be entitled to choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue. If several solvers send solutions of equal merit, the two whose answers are opened first will win the prizes.

## DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 89.

'Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
 Ring, ———, across the snow :  
 The year is going, let him go ;  
 Ring out the false, ring in the true.'

1. 'The hairy gown and mossy cell,  
 Where I may sit and rightly spell  
 Of every star that heaven doth show,  
 And every ——— that sips the dew.'
2. 'Yet this inconstancy is such  
 As thou too shalt ——— ;  
 I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
 Loved I not Honour more.'
3. 'When icicles hang by the wall,  
 And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,  
 And Tom bears logs into the hall,  
 And milk comes frozen home in ———'
4. 'Oh ! it was ——— !  
 Near a whole city full.  
 Home she had none.'
5. 'Ye Mariners of England !  
 That guard our native seas ;  
 Whose flag has braved, a thousand ———,  
 The battle and the breeze !'

## RULES.

1. Only one answer may be sent to each light.
2. Every correct light and upright will score one point.
3. With his answer every solver must send the coupon that is printed on page viii of 'Book Notes' in the preliminary pages of this issue; and he must be careful to give also his real name and address.
4. Solvers should not write either the quotations or the references on the same paper as their answers. It is not necessary, or even desirable, to send them at all.
5. Solvers who write a second letter, to correct a previous answer, must send the complete solution as they wish it, and not merely state the desired alteration.
6. Answers to Acrostic No. 89 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE, 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and must arrive not later than January 20. No answers will be opened before this date.

## ANSWER TO No. 88.

- |      |     |   |
|------|-----|---|
| 1. S | hea | F |
| 2. O | w   | L |
| 3. L | eth | E |
| 4. I | sle | S |
| 5. D | eat | H |

PROEM: Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, i, 2.

## LIGHTS:

1. R. Browning, *Home-Thoughts from Abroad*.
2. Tennyson, *The Owl*.
3. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book 2.
4. Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, iv, 1.
5. Campbell, *Battle of the Baltic*.

Acrostic No. 87 ('Springs Eternal'): Two lights in this acrostic proved unexpectedly difficult, several competitors failing to recognise the quotations from Shakespeare and Lewis Carroll. The prizes are taken by Mr. James Fergusson, c/o William Blackwood and Sons, Ltd., 45 George Street, Edinburgh, and Miss G. Harding, Beulah, Gorey Village, Jersey, Channel Islands.



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